Oh, Christmas tree, oh, Christmas tree, how green your branches used to be…

The beautiful fresh cut Christmas tree that brought you and your family so much Christmas cheer is starting to look more like the ghost of Christmas past. What's up next for your tree? After you remove all the tinsel and decorations, you have options.

Never burn a cut Christmas tree in a fireplace or a woodstove. It may cause creosote to build up and contribute to a chimney fire.

If you purchased your tree at a local plant nursery, give them a call. Some will take the tree back to use for mulch in their growing operations. Residents of Tulsa with city trash service may put cut live trees at the curb on their collection day throughout January. Trees need to be cut into 4-foot sections in order to fit in the trash trucks. Tulsa, Broken Arrow, Jenks, and Bixby residents may bring trees to

the City's Mulch site, 2100 N. 145th East Ave. You can also pick up some free mulch while you are there. Other communities recycle trees for mulch in local parks and public gardens. Check with officials in your town for more information.

For a family friendly and Earthkind activity, recycle your tree as a bird habitat and brighten up your winter landscape. Place the tree outdoors away from the house so you don't scare the birds that come to eat. Leave the tree in the stand, put the trunk in a bucket of dirt, or just tie the tree to a fence for support. The dense branches provide protection from wind, rain, and snow.

Decorate your tree with garlands of cranberries, popcorn, or cereal strung on cotton or other natural fiber, which birds can use later for nest building. Hang slices of fresh apple or oranges. String small bunches of grapes. Smear pinecones with peanut butter and roll them

in birdseed for a high-energy meal for your feathered friends on frigid winter days. If you have mesh bags (like onions sold in grocery stores) fill them with chopped fruit. Birds will appreciate a source of fresh water nearby, too.

This year, the Army Corp of Engineers is accepting real trees only at Fort Gibson Lake. They will place the undecorated trees that have not been sprayed or flocked in appropriate areas to become fish habitats. They will provide a place for small fish to hide and a home for the invertebrates that they eat. If you happen to own a fishing pond, you can use your old Christmas tree to make a great fish habitat, too. Sink the tree by sticking the bottom in a bucket of cement or tie it to a cinderblock to keep the tree under the water.

Recycling your old Christmas is an Earthkind way to give it a new purpose and maybe have some family fun, too.

You can get answers to all your gardening questions by calling the Tulsa Master Gardeners Help Line at 918-746-3701 or by emailing us at mg@tulsamastergardeners.org, or come see us at our Diagnostic Center at 4116 E 15th St., Tulsa, OK.

Sources:

"Christmas Trees for Your Fishpond," University of Florida Extension Service

"Christmas Trees: A Gift for the Fish," Penn State University Extension

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