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'Tis the season for the greenest Christmas tree of all

By JOE LAMP'L / Scripps Howards News Service
Posted December 3, 2009 at 10:18 a.m.

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For a greener Christmas this season, think twice before opting for an artificial Christmas tree as the more eco-friendly choice, because they're not.

Over the last several years I've researched a lot about various aspects of living a more eco-friendly life. But when it comes to choosing a Christmas tree, everything I thought I was doing right for the environment by using an artificial tree went out the window. And it looks like the message is getting out.

According to the National Christmas Tree Association, Americans purchased about 33 percent fewer fake trees in 2008 than in the previous year. Rick Dungey, public-relations manager for the association, shared a few eye-opening thoughts on the real environmental impact of artificial trees in a recent conversation with me.

-- Artificial trees never biodegrade

One of the most common reasons for buying an artificial tree is its longevity. Although artificial trees can last for years, eventually they are discarded, and remain in a landfill forever more. Fake trees are not biodegradable, so they never break down.

-- Real trees are good for the garden

After the season, real trees can be hauled to the back yard as a mini-habitat, or they can be ground and used as valuable mulch to retain moisture and improve soil conditions. But in all cases, real trees are 100 percent biodegradable.

-- Artificial trees include potentially harmful material

Part of what makes artificial trees so sturdy are the components used in construction. PVC plastics are made from petroleum byproducts, heavy metals are used to stabilize the plastics and the metal branches are mined from the ground. In California, warning labels are even required on artificial trees to alert users of the potential risk of hazardous materials, including lead.

-- Real trees are good for the environment

In 2008, 45 million new Christmas trees were planted in tree farms across America.



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Tiger Woods



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Weather

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Currently

38°
Light Rain
Fog/Mist
Wind: E 9mph

Today

48°
38°

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Calendar

DEC	DEC	DEC	BROWSE
8	9	10	
TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	MORE

John Lennon Night 6:30 p.m.
The Events Gallery 956 Parrot Street, Evansville, IN

Holiday Concert Series: Old Dam Community Band 7 p.m.
Central Library

Guitar Hero competition 10 p.m.
Someplace Else Nightclub

APA Pool 8-Ball 7 p.m.
Bob's Lounge

8-Ball Tournament 8 p.m.
Fox & Hound English Pub

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Now featuring four new Reitz
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Wallpapers!

Make an Artificial Christmas Tree



**Wedding & Prom
Showcase**
Now booking exhibitors!
Sunday, Jan. 10, 2010.

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**Baby Jaguars
Naming Contest**
Name two of the rarest animals
ever bred in captivity