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A new twist on living Christmas trees: renting

November 30, 2009 | 11:03 am



'Tis the season for Christmas tree buying, and today there are more options than ever. There are farmed trees, which are grown in the U.S. and Canada and make up the vast majority of Christmas tree sales in the country; more than 28 million were sold in 2008. There are fake trees, which are largely made in China and account for an extra 11 million trees sold annually. Then there are the living trees - many of which are small pines and firs that are potted and can later be planted.

But this year in L.A. there's another option: Living trees for rent. [The Living Christmas Co.](#), based in Torrance, is offering potted, 2- to 7-foot-tall Christmas trees that are delivered and picked up via biodiesel truck.

"For a lot of people, Christmas begins as soon as the tree shows up. It's awesome -- all joy. And then afterward you have that opposite emotion," said company founder, Scott "Scotty Claus" Martin, 30. "You see that same tree laying by the curbside and they don't pick it up right away. There's such a disconnect between something that symbolizes joy and life, and that."

While many cities, including Los Angeles, offer curbside tree recycling programs, Martin says rented trees keep on giving because they provide "joy for years to come." The live trees can also be adopted (and planted), but most will be returned to the company's storage area for maintenance and grooming until next December.

The Living Christmas Co. isn't the first to rent trees. This West Coast phenomena cropped up in 1992, when [The Original Living Christmas Tree Co.](#) set up shop in Portland, Ore. That firm, which only operates in Portland, now rents Sequoias and Nordmann firs for \$80, shipping them out and picking them up in hybrid Zipcars. San Francisco's [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) offers full-size but non-traditional varieties of rentable trees, such as magnolias, for \$95; the trees are later planted throughout the city. And San Diego's [Adopt A Christmas Tree](#) delivers its \$79-\$189 live trees with singing and dancing elves in tow, then after the holidays donates them to families with fire-damaged homes and yards.

The Living Christmas Co. has about 8,000 trees in five different varieties that rent for \$85-\$185, delivery and pick-up included. The company's service area, however, is fairly limited.

"We go from Long Beach up to the Pacific Palisades and as far east as West L.A.," he said, adding that the company intends to expand its area of operation next year.

-- Susan Carpenter

Photo: [Living Christmas Company](#)

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