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THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN
Thursday, January 6, 2022

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CITY

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2021

Berkeley holiday tree disposal features composting this winter season



MOMOKA SASAKI/STAFF

The city of Berkeley released a press release detailing what to do to mitigate tree waste this holiday season.

BY [LILY BUTTON](#) | STAFF

LAST UPDATED NOVEMBER 30, 2021

The city of Berkeley released a guide Nov. 24 for the renting and disposing of holiday trees, with the purpose of minimizing the negative environmental impact of the holidays.

During the 2019 and 2020 holiday seasons, the city Zero Waste Division collected 150 trees left outside residential curbsides, noted city spokesperson Matthai Chakko.

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“A core goal of our Zero Waste Division is to reduce waste and tree waste is one such moment,” Chakko said in an email. “The holidays are a period where potential waste can be avoided and we wanted to proactively communicate with our community.”

Whole trees left on the street will not be collected by the city this year due to possible damage to collection trucks, according to a city press release. Instead, the release outlines various steps consumers should take to properly dispose of their holiday trees at the end of the winter season.

The press release notes that tree owners may cut their live trees for placement in green domestic compost bins. Composting at home requires the removal of all artificial decorations, including tinsel, lights, ornaments and plastic tree stands.

Residents may also drop off their compostable trees at the Transfer Station for free until Jan. 31. Trees will be accepted for a \$23 fee thereafter, according to the press release.

Artificial trees will always incur a \$29 fee, the press release adds.

Matteo Garbelotto, UC Berkeley environmental science, policy and management, or ESPM, adjunct professor, noted the importance of not planting or discarding the trees in outdoor spaces. He added that doing so could interfere with existing ecosystems.

“The risk is that of starting a State and National plant disease epidemic that may decimate our native flora,” Garbelotto said in an email.

Fusarium circinatum and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* are two pathogens that can infect holiday trees without visible signs or symptoms, making it difficult to recognize contaminated trees, Garbelotto added. Improper disposal of these trees can cause “irreparable damage” to California ecosystems.

John Battles, campus ESPM professor, noted the danger of pathogen movement in the holiday tree transportation industry.

“Buying trees at a source locally is the best way to go,” Battles said.

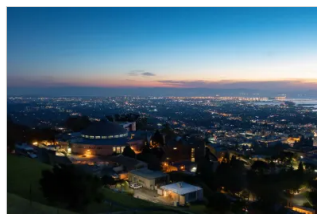
Composting trees can be a source of mulch, rather than burning or burying them, Battles suggested.

Daniel Sanchez, campus assistant cooperative extension specialist in the ESPM department, added that harvesting trees from overstocked forests to decrease California’s risk of wildfires is a viable option.

According to Ronald Amundson, campus ESPM professor, trees are only a minor component of the waste people produce during the holidays. He noted the importance of looking beyond trees when considering the environmental impact of this holiday season.

“Tree purchasing and decoration is far better (if recycled) than the consumer goods, and air travel, we all contribute to during the Holidays,” Amundson said in an email.

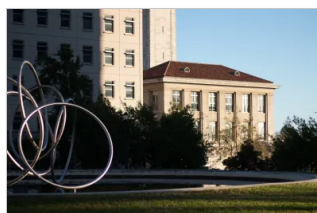
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