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[A greener holiday tree](#)

(The views and opinions expressed in this blog are strictly those of the author.)

The sight of all of those Christmas trees sitting on the curb after the New Year has always rubbed me the wrong way as my mind races through their timeline: Tree grown solely to be chopped down, sold to a Christmas tree lot, sold to a family who puts it on display for a short-lived existence of photo opps, then thrown to the curb. What a sad life for a tree, and at times I have even questioned the sadness of the tradition!



But finally, the perfect solution is here for those who experience the same feelings: renting live potted trees! Granted, the idea isn't exactly new, but it's one that is catching on in the United States and, I hear, even abroad.

The tradition of buying, decorating and enjoying the seasonal fragrance of a live tree — whether it is for your lobby, office or home — is something many look forward to at this time of year, especially in hospitality. Thanks to their often lower cost and attractive green value compared to that of buying a “cut tree,” the benefits of renting live potted trees have many rethinking their tree-sourcing traditions this year. Even artificial tree sales are taking a hit due to ongoing issues ranging from non-biodegradability and metal toxin concerns. And the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently added fuel to the fire, reporting that some 33 million Christmas trees are grown, cut down and sold in the United States every year!



Additional benefits swaying many to rent their holiday trees include:

- Rented trees last longer and are less of a mess. (You won't experience severe needle loss.)
- The fear of pets or children knocking over wobbly trees vanishes because rental trees live in sturdy secure pots.
- Living trees are typically delivered un-decorated, but many of the new rental businesses are offering fully decorated delivery options.
- At the end of the season (a.k.a., your rental term), you can "adopt" the same tree, which will be brought back to you year after year until it is fully mature. After approximately seven years, the tree will more than likely be deemed too large for practical rental purposes, so you can opt to have it planted, making it a great family tradition to enjoy all year long.

If children are part of your property environment, renting a live tree is also a great way to share the art of "nurturing and caring" so they too can be a part of your tree maintenance. Placing watering cans around your tree-staging area is a fun way to engage your younger guests with the lesson about how trees clean the air and emit oxygen.

Even nonprofits are getting into the tree-rental action! I recently learned about a nonprofit in the state of Washington that added its own twist with a commitment to plant 200 trees (once returned after their rental period) along a local stream to provide shade in the future and to prevent erosion.

Tree rentals may not be everywhere just yet, but my radar tells me the future of the business sounds promising thanks to the attraction of having an alternative to cutting down a tree just to set it on the curbside for a trash service to pick up a few weeks later.

With many of you on a quest to source your own holiday tree any day now, and in the spirit of "a greener alternative," I leave you with a simple question: If you could rent a live tree for your hotel or home, would you buy into the trend?

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