



# The Great Tree Debate

Still mulling over whether to go real or artificial for this year's Christmas tree? RCBC's put together some facts to help residents make the most eco-friendly choice.



## 01 | PRODUCTION

Artificial Trees	Real Trees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trees travel thousands of kilometers before reaching consumers, burning fossil fuels that cause air pollution and climate change.</li><li>Typically made with metals and PVC, which may contain potentially toxic additives.</li><li>Older varieties may contain lead, a stabilizer used in the manufacturing process. Lead contamination is so prevalent that warning labels were on many artificial trees.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>BC annually produces 900,000 Christmas trees, grown by 450 farmers from the Kootenays, the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, and the Okanagan.</li><li>Real trees travel relatively short distances to reach the consumer, meaning fewer transportation emissions.</li><li>Every acre of Christmas trees provides daily O2 for 18 people. Trees stabilize soil, protect water sources from sediments, and sequester CO2.</li></ul>



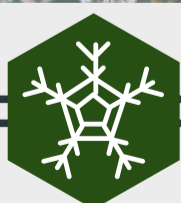
## 02 | CONSUMER USE

Artificial Trees	Real Trees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>On average, an artificial tree is kept for approximately 6 years.</li><li>Trees are cheaper and more convenient to store.</li><li>The PVC used in trees contains phthalates, a substance that can accumulate in body tissues and can damage the liver, lungs and reproductive organs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A live cut tree is used only for one season.</li><li>Tradition plays a large part in the choice of a real tree. (i.e. choosing the perfect tree, aroma in the home, etc.)</li><li>Improperly cared for trees can pose a fire risk.</li></ul>



## 03 | DISPOSAL

Artificial Trees	Real Trees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No recycling option exists for plastic/metal composites.</li><li>Trees end up in landfills where they do not biodegrade.</li><li>Incinerating trees can release dioxins and other carcinogens into the air which can pose health risks.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Real trees are compostable and biodegradable.</li><li>Christmas tree chipping events take place after the holidays in most municipalities, and often go towards supporting local charities.</li></ul>



## VERDICT

**So what does RCBC recommend as the most eco-friendly option?** Between a plastic tree or a live cut one, factoring in production, use, and disposal, **we think that a REAL Christmas tree is the way to go.**

If you do plan on getting an artificial tree, make sure to use it as long as many years as possible to spread out its impact over time.

However, there might be an even better third option: **Live Potted Trees!** Check out our Live Tree Care Guide for more info.



**RECYCLING COUNCIL**  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

What to learn more about live vs. artificial Christmas trees? Need dates for tree chipping events?

Visit [www.rcbc.ca](http://www.rcbc.ca) or call  
Lower Mainland: 604-732-9253  
Toll-Free: 1-800-667-4321