

Christmas trees will be turned into compost in Carson Valley

By Kathryn Reed

Fertile Mulch. That's what recycled Christmas trees are turned into at Full Circle Compost in Minden.

Craig Witt, who runs the compost operation in the Carson Valley, hasn't promoted this product much in the past because he hasn't been able to make enough of it to keep up with demand. He's hoping that is about to change.



One thing that could make Fertile Mulch even more popular is a study from UNR that is supposed to come out in January that rates various mulches for their fire resistance. According to Witt, this is the top product.

The mulch's ability to retain water is a key factor to why it is fire resistant, Witt said.

It is recycled trees from South Tahoe Refuse, ones Wal-Mart could not sell and other sources that Witt uses to create the various mulches.

"When we get the trees from South Tahoe Refuse we will process them, put them through a tub grinder, then size sort the material to create Fertile Mulch," Witt said. "We expose it to 150-degree intense heat cycle."

His recipe for this material takes a matter of weeks, whereas Mother Nature would take years to breakdown the pines.

STR starts its tree recycling today and continues through Jan. 7. Customers need to remove all decorations, have trees no

longer than 6-feet, and set them at the end of the driveway next to the rest of the trash.

“A lot used to be chipped and used locally. Now most go to composting,” Jeanne Lear of STR said of the nearly 3,000 trees the company recycles each holiday season.

Along most routes, the trees are picked up in the regular cycle and then separated at the refuse company. However, when drivers see a slew of trees in a neighborhood a special truck may be sent to handle them. Trees are picked up on normal garbage days.

Witt’s retail operation is not open this time of year, but the mulch will be ready in the spring.

“There is nothing wrong with raw mulch, but it’s like feeding raw food to an infant. It needs to be more refined,” Witt said.

When raw wood is put into the ground it throws off the nitrogen-carbon ratio, which slows down plant growth.

Witt says his composting process creates a mulch that when mixed with soil has the end result of more robust plants.

For more information about South Tahoe Refuse tree recycling, call (530) 541.5105 and for more information about Full Circle Compost go online.