



Hello from Minnesota. The dragons have been organizing for craft sales and school visits. And in celebration of the winter holidays we're writing about trees. Don't forget your dragon gifts - visit the [dragon store](#) for lots of fun ideas!

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Northwest Beaches: Salmon in the Trees!

Last month we wrote about welcoming the salmon home - back to our rivers and streams. Now most of them have spawned and died and the eagles have come to feast on the carcasses. Did you know that salmon play a vital role in the Pacific Northwest old-growth forest ecosystems? Without the salmon there would be none of the nutrition that helps to make strong healthy trees.

Here's how it works: Salmon come up rivers to spawn. And waiting for them are bears, eagles, otters and other wildlife ready to scoop up the banquet that's swimming by. They may eat the fish right in the river or drag it into the woods. Bits of the carcasses decay in the woods eventually to be absorbed into the soils and then into the trees. And then there's the poop - lots of salmon nutrients there!

There's a beautiful new book called [Salmon in the Trees](#) by Amy Gulick about the Tongass forest in Alaska. "The forests are where the ocean comes to die - and to be reborn. The salmon are the ocean animated part of the strangely wonderful, wonderfully strange shape-shifting-sea-to-summit magic....."

Next time you're hiking in the forest remember the salmon in the trees!



Yvonne Palka

Yvonne is the award-winning sumi-e artist who wrote and illustrated *Dragon Fire, Ocean Mist*. A retired college professor, grandmother, biologist and naturalist, she is passionate about introducing children and adults to the wonders of the natural world.

[VISIT YVONNE'S BLOG](#)

Overhead at the Oak View Elementary Craft Sale:

"Mom, all of my friends have said, 'This is, like, the BEST book I've ever read and I've read it over and over again!!' Will you buy me one for Christmas, PLEASE????"

Alexis R., 5th grade, Maple Grove, MN

Dragons: The Dragon Tree!

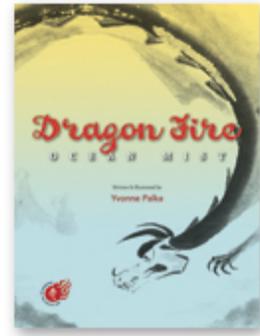
I went looking on Google for a legend about dragons that might live in trees and to my amazement found that there is a plant called the Dragon Tree (*Draecena draco*)! It's a variety of *Draecena*, a commonly cultivated plant that grows in semi-desert climates. The oldest and most famous one is in the Canary Islands (Spain). Why is it called a Dragon Tree? Perhaps because its stem is so twisted and multi-trunked and reminded folks of the multiheaded dragons so common in European mythology.

And the resin of this plant is called - you guessed it - Dragon's Blood! It is bright red, had lots of ancient medicinal uses, and today is still used as a varnish for violins - it gives them that beautiful reddish color.

Asian Art: Super Simple Sumi Holiday Tree!

This one is simple. Just take your brush, load it with light and dark ink (or just one color if you prefer), then make strokes first to one side, than the other starting from the bottom and working your way to the top. You can see how I did it by looking at the center of the tree and seeing where each brush stroke starts. After it's dry you can take some marker pens and put on some colored ornaments and a decoration at the top.

Happy Holidays!



Dragon Fire Ocean Mist

Written & Illustrated by Yvonne Palka

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Cover of beautiful new book ["Salmon in the Trees"](#)



Oldest Dragon Tree (600 years) in the Canary Islands



Super Simple Sumi Holiday Tree



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