

Tips for Christmas tree shopping

MEDIA — During the next week thousands of Delaware County families will be going through the annual ritual of trying to select the Christmas tree, one that will come somewhere near meeting the approval of each member of the family. In many households there are great differences of opinion on what special of Christmas tree is most attractive, says James J. McKeehen, Delaware County Extension Agricultural Agent. Some like pine, some spruce, and other fir. For families who wish to choose their tree on the basis of species and other information, the following facts will be helpful:

Pines have needles grouped in clusters, each cluster of needles being wrapped in a sheath.

Scotch pine has two needles to the cluster, ranging from 1½ to 2½ in. long.

American red pine and Austrian pine have two needles per cluster, but the needles range from three to five inches long.

White pine is easy to identify because it always has five needles in a group and it is the only pine that falls in this category.

All pines hold their needles well.

Balsam fir and douglas fir are found in local markets. Canadian or New England balsam is most common. Douglas is usually grown

locally. Firs have flat needles ranging from one-half to an inch and ¼ long. Needles can't be rolled between the thumb and finger. Fir trees hold their needles well when fresh and set in water.

Spruce trees have four-sided needles. They can be rolled between thumb and finger. All species of spruce are attractive. Spruces do not hold their needles as long as pine or firs.

No matter what the species of tree that you select you should care for it for a good appearance and safety's sake. Here are some tips on how to maintain good tree color, reduce needle drop, and keep the tree moist and more resistant to fire.

When you bring your tree home from the market, place it in a bucket of water outdoors or in a cool place until you are ready to decorate it. Exposure to snow or rain won't hurt it but heat will dry it out and cause the needles to drop early.

When you're ready to bring it indoors, make a fresh cut across the trunk about an inch above the original one. The tree will absorb more water.

Place the tree in a container or tree holder filled with water. Never place the tree near a fireplace.

Keep the cut surface covered with water at all times. A tree in a warm room may use a pint of water

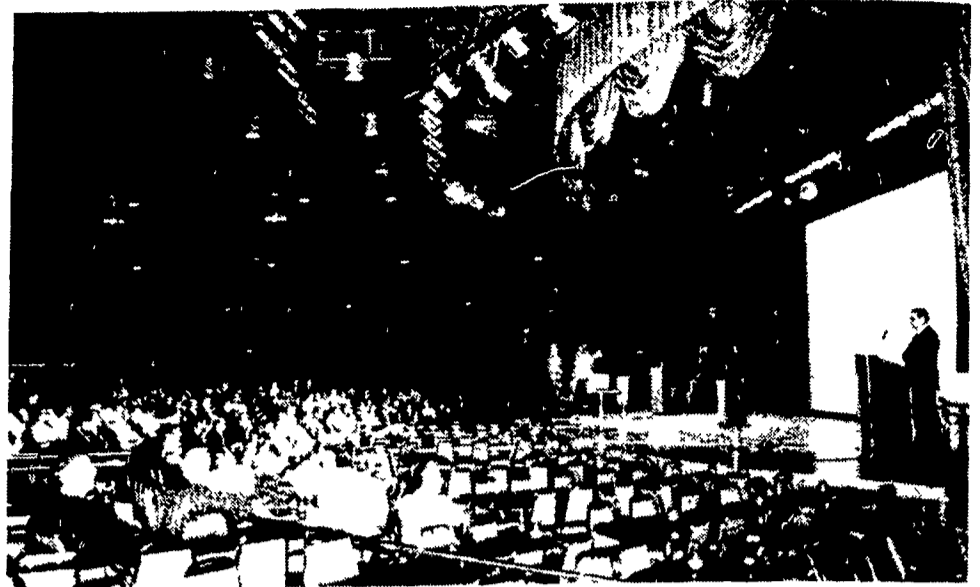
a day. The larger the container the fewer times you have to fill it.

The United States Forest Products Laboratory investigated the benefits of fire-retardant chemicals on Christmas trees and concluded that keeping the tree standing in water is about the most practical, satisfactory, and convenient method for reducing fire hazards and preventing the needles from discoloring and falling. However, if you want to go one step further and it gives you peace of mind to know you're exercising every precaution against fire hazards, here's a simple formula to spray on your tree and Christmas greens.

Mix nine parts by volume of sodium silicate (water glass), which you can buy at most drugstores, with one part of water containing a laundry detergent. Use about one teaspoon of the detergent for each quart of water. You can apply the solution by using a garden sprayer, vacuum cleaner or paint sprayer, or you can dip whatever you want protected in the solution.

A heavy coating is necessary to reduce the fire hazard. One coat will help keep the flames from spreading. Two coats are even better. If you use a sprayer, thin the mixture by adding more water but be sure to apply more of the solution.

Dairymen attend seminar



Garner P. Mitchell, Potter County Extension Director, told farmers at the Host Farm, Lancaster, that the key to dairy profits was increasing return over feed cost. He was part of a program celebrating the 30th anniversary of Harvestore, Inc. and the 15th anniversary of the Penn Jersey store.

Christmas gifts from Penn State

UNIVERSITY PARK — Christmas gift ideas are among the maps and guidebooks available from the College of Agriculture, at Penn State. Among the most popular are Birds of Pennsylvania, Winemaking as a Hobby, and the Stream Map of the Commonwealth.

Mail orders should be sent no later than December 12 to assure delivery before Christmas. To pick up copies on campus, stop at room 234 of the Agricultural Administration Building at University Park.

The Stream Map of Pennsylvania shows over 3000 each of streams, towns, and elevations above sea level. Names of major mountains and valleys are

included as are locations of forest fire control towers operated by the Commonwealth. Locations of swamps, lakes, dams, and reservoirs are shown.

The Stream Map is about three feet high and five feet long. It is available either flat or folded. The flat map appeals to persons wishing to mount them neatly on walls of homes and cabins.

The Stream Map costs \$1.06, tax included, from Stream Map, Box 6000 University Park, Pa. 16802. Requests should state whether a flat or folded map is desired.

Checks or money orders should be made payable to The Pennsylvania State University.

Birds of Pennsylvania, revised this year, describes the 381 species reported normally in the Commonwealth. A paperback volume, it includes 186 pen-and-ink drawings of the most common species in the State. A calendar of birdlife tells what may be expected in each month. The guidebook lists abundance, seasonal occurrence, habits and status changes, and general breeding and wintering ranges.

Birds of Pennsylvania is available for \$2.12, tax included, by writing to Birds, Box 6000, University Park, Pa. 16802. Make checks or money orders payable to The Pennsylvania State University.



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