

Christmas trees

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be all that is left after a busy December that sees hundreds of tree customers hiking the hillsides in pursuit of the perfect evergreen.

Favoring the "choose and cut" method of sales, Kilgore prefers harvesting each tree fresh for the buyer. Saturdays in December at the farm are unbelievably hectic, but other family members keep the busiest sales day free for helping. On the second Saturday of each December, Kilgore brothers and sisters, their families and some friends, converge on the Delta farm to help scout, cut and load trees for buyers. Many of the customers drive from the Baltimore metropolitan area for the fresh-from-the-farm trees.

Kilgore has not found it necessary to advertise, since return customers and word-of-mouth recommendations pull in all the business he can handle.

Some customers prefer live specimens for their Christmas use. Kilgore digs these by hand, slicing around the root ball with a shovel, then carefully digging from one side to undermine the root system.

He says that such trees can successfully be replanted outside after the holidays, if preparations are made ahead. Kilgore suggests that a hole, plenty large enough for the balled root system, be dug well ahead of time, and the soil saved inside where it will not freeze. Trees up to five feet in height will do the best. They should be moved both into and back out of the warmth of a home gradually, and given time to adapt to temperature changes.

While inside, live trees should have the same treatment—perhaps even more careful—that is given cut specimens. That means keeping the tree in the coolest spot possible, since heat is a Christmas tree's worst enemy. Plenty of water should be available to a cut tree, since the trunk butt of a cut specimen will seal off if allowed to dry out. Live specimen root

systems must be kept moist and should be planted just as soon as possible after the holiday.

Given such care, holiday evergreens should stay attractive for several weeks. Spruces have shorter indoor-life spans, and will begin losing needles after three weeks. Some pines will remain in good condition for up to two months, Kilgore says.

While Scotch pines continue to rank tops in Christmas tree popularity, Kilgore also grows Douglas firs, white pines, some spruces and the Fraser fir, a relative newcomer to the tree industry widely grown in the Carolinas. Fraser firs are gaining followers as holiday decorations, since their sturdy needles cling to the tree with almost stubborn determination.

A member of the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, Kilgore stays abreast of industry developments by reading and attending related meetings and functions, including the national convention every other year. Through these educational activities, he has had the chance to visit a thousand-acre Scotch pine plantation in Michigan, large acreages of Balsam firs in Canada and observe the emergence of the Christmas tree industry in the south, especially in Georgia, Virginia and the Carolinas.

As a side hobby interest, Kilgore also grows hollies from seed, planting the ripe, red berries in raised nursery beds like those used for the evergreen seedlings. He also replants seedlings that sprout from berries of the large holly trees that dot the Kilgore farm. While the hollies are not part of the seasonal sales, their colorful presence near the pines complements the holiday feeling.

With rows of trees in shades of green and bluish-greens lining the hills, hollies adding a touch of cherry red, and the fragrance of pine hovering over it all, it's obvious that Christmas—or at least a little part of Christmas—lives on this York County farm.



Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
Lancaster Extension
Home Economist

Decorate Your Tree Safely

The Christmas tree is one of the most beautiful of all holiday decorations. But the tree can also be dangerous.

If you have an artificial tree, make sure it's fire resistant. When purchasing a natural tree, make sure it's fresh. A fresh tree should have a deep green color and strong pine scent. Needles should bend without breaking and be firmly attached to the twigs. If many needles fall off when the tree is shaken or bumped lightly on the ground, the tree may be too dry.

A tree purchased too early will dry out and become a fire hazard. Even if you buy a tree at the last minute, it may have been cut very early and have dried out. Don't be misled by a nicely-shaped tree. The best looking tree may not be the safest.

Keep the tree outside in a cool area until you are ready to bring it inside. Cut about two inches off the trunk before you put it in a stand. This new cut will draw in water more easily than the original cut, which has probably hardened and dried up. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree will not dry out as fast. Place the tree away from heat registers, radiators and fireplaces that will dry out the tree much faster.

Use light cords on your tree that carry UL approval. Use only indirect lighting on metal trees. Purchase a new string of lights instead of trying to get by one more year with the old, worn out lights. Before putting any lights on the tree, check strings for loose or broken sockets and cords with bare wires showing.

Never use candles on or near the tree. Avoid small items that might look like food or candy to children who might try to eat them.

Pets Can Be Educational Gifts

There are hundreds of educational toys that teach a child to do things—read, draw or build. But have you thought of the one gift that can teach a child to be a better person? That rare gift is a pet.

A puppy or kitten that a child plays with and cares for gives his small master daily lessons in kindness, getting along with others, responsibility and love. From his furry, four-footed friend, a child can also learn about patience, sharing and how living things grow.

Psychologists who have used pets in therapy with children point out that because a house pet must be trained, this helps children accept rules and regulations for themselves.

If a child is old enough to help with the pet's training—a 10 year-old can even take his dog to obedience school—he discovers that praise and kindness get better results than force.

A pet quickly shows a child the necessity for being considerate of the feelings of another living creature. If the new puppy or kitten isn't handled gently, the new friend won't want to play with the child. A child should be shown how to lift an animal correctly—with arms supporting both the chest and the hind quarters—so the pet won't accidentally be injured.

Have you ever wished you could convince your children that speaking quietly gets better results than yelling? A pet can help you do it. Little screamers will observe that loud voices make a dog retreat under the sofa, and it takes a lot of soft talk to coax him out again.

A child who finds it hard to make friends will suddenly discover he's the neighborhood celebrity when he shows a new pet.

A friendly animal that showers love on every member of the family gives an easy-to-understand demonstration of the joys of shared pleasure. Seeing a puppy or kitten grow from helpless infancy to adulthood, gives a child some insight into his own growing up.

A pet can be a great teacher and a great friend at the same time—a valuable gift you could give a child at Christmas.



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Luke, I was there when the doors opened Dec. 9th, and I'm going back before the sale ends Dec. 31st for more good buys!

You remembered what I told you, Jake... The Early Bird gets the bargains!

Thanks, Luke! I'm going through that 20 page flyer again and heading back to BINKLEY & HURST - they have something for everyone!

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