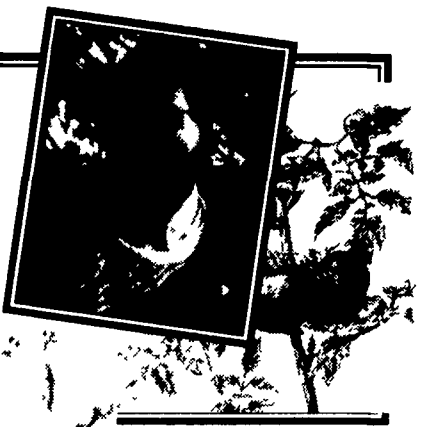


**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



**CHRISTMAS TREES:
THE GOOD, THE BAD
AND THE UGLY**

Celebrate thanksgiving by thinking green — not greenbacks but a fresh Christmas tree.

Choose a farm-raised tree by selecting and cutting a tree at a local Christmas tree farm. For Pennsylvania grown trees, write for a guide called, "Pennsylvania Grown Christmas Tree Guide." It identifies Choose and Cut Farms, retail tree lots, gift shops, and farm stands. For a free copy, write to: the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers' Association, 44 Cessna Drive, Halifax, PA 17032.

In Pennsylvania, more than 1,600 Christmas tree farms raise trees including your favorites:

Scotch pine, Austrian pine, Colorado blue spruce, white spruce, Norway spruce, douglas fir, fraser fir, concolor fir, and balsam fir. White pine is the only native Pennsylvania tree. These trees were cut a hundred years ago as "wildings" from the forests of Pennsylvania.

A high quality Christmas tree starts from a seed collected from carefully selected wild tree or from orchard tree. Once collected, seeds are sown in a nursery bed and left to grow for 1 to 3 years before they are lifted and sorted for field planting.

Five to 25 years after field planting, depending on species, Christmas trees are about 6 to 7 feet in height. Christmas tree

growers raise about 1,000 trees per acre. The harvest season begins in earnest in early November and continues almost to Christmas Day.

To purchase the freshest trees off a tree lot, select the tree during daylight hours. After looking at the overall health and shape of all the trees on the lot, choose one or two that have especially attractive green or blue (depending on species) color.

To test the freshness of the tree, roll the needles on a branch at mid-height in your hands. Start at the branch tips and move inward. If any needles fall off, the tree is already dried out. Only needles that fall off near the trunk are considered OK. Also check the stump. A moist, sappy stump indicates a newly cut tree.

The best Christmas trees have a conical symmetrical shape, a pleasing fragrance and branches sturdy enough to hold lights and ornaments. Only a fresh tree is fire resistant. Avoid placing near sources of heat (fireplace, radiator, air ducts, TV sets, etc.). White spruces drop their needles when dry, pines do not.

If you think someone might be tempted to cut and steal an evergreen tree from your property, consider this: Make your trees less appealing by applying the "ugly" mix.

Heat 2 gallons of water to 63 degrees Fahrenheit and pour it into a large container, preferably an aluminum one. In a separate container, mix 20 ounces of hydrated lime with 4 ounces of an antidesiccant like *Wilt-pruf*, until a uniform paste is produced. Fold the paste slowly into the water. When the mixture is an even, lightly milky color, add 2 bottles of pink (or other brightly colored) food coloring. Blend the mixture until it is uniform in color.

On a warm, dry day, spray or splatter the mix onto trees you want to protect. Rain will gradually wash it off.

The above was written by Thomas S. Becker, Extension Agent-Horticulture. Questions concerning this article can be directed to him at 717-840-7408.

Growing Green Manure

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Green manure is a crop that's grown and then incorporated into the soil to increase organic matter content and soil fertility. According to Susan J. Goldsworthy, extension horticulturist, a cover crop is basically the same as a green manure, but is also grown to protect against soil erosion and/or to control weeds in another crop. Living mulch is another term used for a crop grown with another to control weeds, shade the soil, and serve other

functions of a regular mulch.

Three green manure crops that do well when sown in the fall are hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa*), crimson clover (*Trifolium incarnatum*) and winter rye (*Secale cereale*). The first 2 also have the advantage of being legumes that fix atmospheric nitrogen in nodules on their roots. Generally, green manure crops will grow for several weeks in the fall, remain in the garden over winter, and be tilled into the soil in the spring.

got milk?

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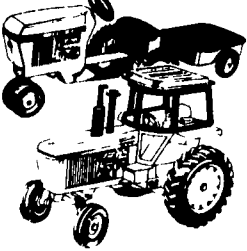
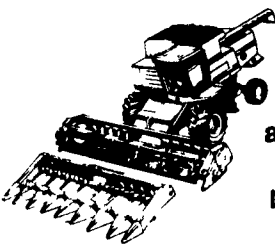
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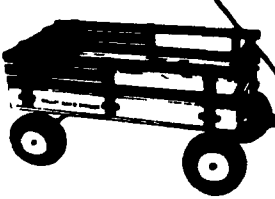
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