

Christmas Tree Selection

For many families, selection and purchase of a fresh tree is an annual tradition. Ever since the first tree lot was set up in New York City in 1851, many different species of Christmas trees are grown and sold in Pennsylvania.

Select a fresh, fragrant, and affordable Christmas tree this season. the two most popular ways to purchase a Christmas tree is at a retail lot or choose-

Retail lots are temporary lots set up in shopping centers, discount stores, service stations, fire halls and fairgrounds. On retail lots, check for tree freshness. Freshness greatly influences how well trees hold their needles and the fragrance they produce in your home.

Choose-and-Cut Farms, called plantations, provide Christmas trees right at the farm. Most farmers have areas of rows of trees marked for harthe trees before selecting one to cut. The trees are cut and hauled out of the field for you. At many farms, it is possible to pretag a tree earlier in the season and then go out at Christmastime and harvest it.

Purchase a live, balled-andburlapped Christmas tree for use in the landscape. Purchase living Christmas trees at retail lots, choose-and-cut farms, and may nurseries and garden centers.

Different spices of Christmas trees are normally sold in Pennsylvania. Popular tree species include Eastern White pine, Fraser Fir, Concolor Fir, Scotch Pine, Norway Spruce, White Spruce, Douglas Fir, Blue Spruce, Balsam Fir, Canaan Fir, Southwestern White Fir and others. These trees can be divided into two groups: short-needled, spruces and firs and the long-needled pines.

Each Christmas tree species has different growth characteristics. These include needle

and shape. The ideal Christmas tree would have good needleholding ability, an attractive color, a full bushy appearance, a conical symmetrical shape, a pleasing fragrance and branches sturdy enough to hold ornaments. Choose the right variety and size depending on where in the house the tree will be kept. Most standard rooms will easily accommodate a 7-foot tree; however, some rooms with cathedral ceilings can accommodate a

much larger tree. On may lots and farms, trees are priced according to height. Some sellers also offer table-top trees, which are relatively inexpensive and many be a good alternative for a small apartment, dorm room etc.

No matter what type of tree you select, purchase a tree that was recently cut. A fresh tree has a healthy, green appearance without a large number of dead or browning needles. Needles should appear fresh and flexible and should not come off in your hand if you gently stroke a branch. A useful trick is to lift a cut tree a couple of inches off the ground and let it drop on the cut butt. Green needles should not drop off the tree. A few dried, inner needles may fall, but certainly the outer, green needles should not be affected.

Popular Christmas Tree Type

Fraser Fir: Very soft needles, 1/2" to 1" long, shiny bright dark green above and silvery white below, very fragrant and popular, high priced.

White Spruce: Stiff needles, light blue-green in color, 1/3" to 3/4" long surrounding the twig, grows dense.

White Fir or Concolor fir: needles 1 1/2" to 2" long, soft needles vary from silvery-blue to silvery-green, citrus aroma.

Douglas-Fir: Not a true fir, needles 3/4" to 1 1/4" long, green to blue green, occur in two rows along the twig, very fragrant and popular, medium to high priced.

Scotch Pine: A two-needled pine with the twisted, stiff 2" to 2 1/2" needles, holds color well, dark green to blue-green needles, lower priced

Eastern White Pine: Needles are green to blue-green, 2" to 4" long in groups of 5, medium priced.

Any questions can be directed Thomas S. Becker, Horticultural Agent, Penn State Cooperative Extension, York County (717) 840-7408 or Email at Yorkmg@psu.edu.



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