

# Trees Offer Many Holiday Choices

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Deciding what toys to buy for the kids is not the only tough decision to make this holiday season. Christmas trees also have many traits and sizes.

Overall appearance, color, needle length, branch characteristics and price are just some of the things to consider, said Randy Heiligmann, Ohio State University Extension forestry specialist.

More than 30 million real Christmas trees are purchased each year in the United States. In Ohio, more than a million families will select their trees at a tree lot or visit an Ohio Christmas tree farm to select and cut their own tree.

The most common question people ask, Heiligmann said, is "Which species should I buy?" "There is no 'right' answer to that question," he said. "The 'right' Christmas tree is very much a matter of personal taste, and consumers need to spend some time learning which species they prefer."

While all Christmas trees are needle-bearing evergreens, there is a great deal of variation among the species. There also can be considerable variation between trees of the same species, depending on where the trees were grown and how they were managed, Heiligmann said.

"A tightly sheared blue spruce will, for example, look very different from one that has been lightly sheared throughout its life," he said.

To make selection a little easier, Christmas tree species can be divided into two groups — pines, such as Scotch and white pine, and the single-needle conifers, including spruces and firs.

The easiest way to tell the two groups apart is pines have their needles attached to branches in groups of two or more, while single-needle conifer needles are individually attached to branches, Heiligmann said. Pines also generally have longer needles and their branches come off the main stem at distinct intervals — called whorls — versus emerging all along the stem as single-needle conifer branches do.

In Ohio, more than 90 percent

of the Christmas trees marketed are one of six species: Scotch pine, eastern white pine, blue spruce, Douglas fir, Fraser fir and Canaan fir.

"Each of these species has something unique to offer consumers, whether it's the length of the needles, the aroma or the color of the tree," Heiligmann said.

Here is a brief description of the characteristics of Ohio's six most popular Christmas tree species:

— Scotch pine trees are native to Europe and eastern Asia and historically are the most popular Christmas trees grown and sold in Ohio and throughout the country. Needles are 1 inch to 3 inches long and are somewhat stiff and twisted. The tree is a green to blue-green color, with long branches capable of supporting many decorations and heavy ornaments. Scotch pine is also known to have better needle retention than almost any other Christmas tree species. It is commonly sheared tightly to produce dense foliage, although trees sheared lighter with a more open appearance can be found.

— Eastern white pine, native to eastern North America, is the second most popular pine Christmas tree species. Its needles are 2 inches to 5 inches in length. The soft, flexible needles are yellow-green to blue-green in color. Eastern white pines have slender, flexible branches capable of supporting a few, small decorations. It has very good to excellent needle retention and, like Scotch pine, is most commonly sheared fairly tightly to produce thick foliage.

— Blue spruces are native to high elevations in the mountains of the western United States. This species has become increasingly popular. It has 1-inch to 1.5-inch needles that are very sharply pointed and stiff. The colors of this tree vary from blue-green to silvery-white. Blue spruce branches are relatively stiff and bumpy and will support many decorations and heavy ornaments. Needle retention is good, though it requires consistent watering and will not toler-

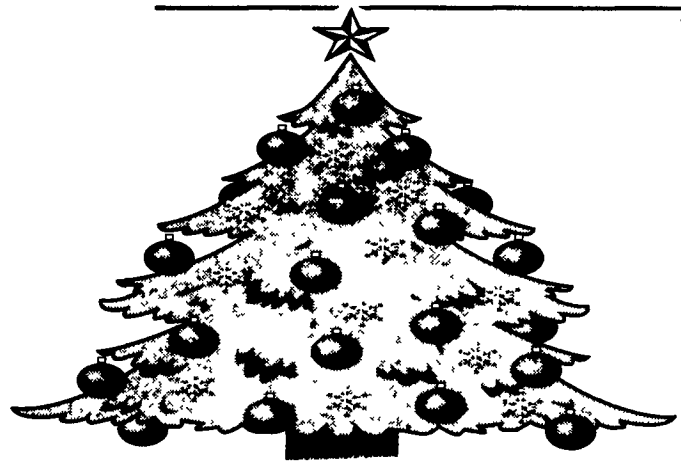
ate dry tree stands. If the stand goes dry, many needles will drop. The tree's sharp needles may make it an inappropriate choice for homes with small children.

— Fraser fir trees are native to high elevations of the southern Appalachian Mountains. This is a fragrant, dark green species whose popularity has increased dramatically in recent years. These trees have half-inch to 1-inch flat needles. This species has a strong natural symmetry that requires less shearing and allows for attractive trees over a wide range of density. It also has rather strong, smooth branches to support decorations and deep green, relatively soft foliage. It does an excellent job of retaining needles and produces the balsam aroma commonly associated with the Christmas holiday.

— Canaan firs are native to West Virginia and Virginia. It is a relatively new Christmas tree variety that is rapidly gaining acceptance by both Christmas tree growers and consumers. These trees have three-fourth-inch to 1.5-inch needles. Like the Fraser fir, the species has attractive dark green, relatively soft foliage, rather stiff branches to support decorations and is available in a wide range of densities. It has good to very good needle retention and also produces a balsam aroma.

— Douglas fir is native to the mountains of the western United States. This tree is popular throughout the country. The needles are flat and 1 inch to 1.5 inches in length. The trees range from green to blue-green. When the needles are crushed, the Douglas fir gives off a mild, almost sweet smell. It has soft, attractive foliage and very good needle retention. This species has a strong natural symmetry, requiring less shearing and allowing for attractive trees with a variety of densities.

For more information on Christmas tree selection, care and disposal, contact your local office of Ohio State University Extension or view the fact sheet *Selecting and Caring for Your Cut Christmas Tree* on Extension's Ohioline website at (<http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu>).



## 4-H Veterinary Science Course

4-H Veterinary Science courses are being offered in January-April to all youth ages 12-18-years-old by Penn State Cooperative Extension, Bucks County. The classes will be taught by local veterinarians.

Students will receive hands-on training in animal science including how to take an animal's temperature, pulse, and respiration rate, normal and abnormal behavior, and general animal physiology in Vet Science I. A visit to a vet's office or farm may be included.

Vet Science I will meet for six sessions and is offered in three locations:

- Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, Mondays 7 p.m.-8 p.m., Jan. 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26, and March 5.

- 4-H Extension Office, Neshaminy Manor Center, Doylestown, Wednesdays, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m., March 7, 14, 21, 28, and April 4, 11.

- Plumsteadville Grange, Rt. 611 in Plumsteadville, Tuesdays 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Jan. 16, 23, 30, and Feb. 6, 13, 20.

Registration is required and can be made by calling the Bucks County Penn State Cooperative Extension Office (215) 345-3283. Registration deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 2.

## Cumberland County Wide 4-H Dairy Club

The last meeting of the Cumberland County Wide 4-H Dairy Club was Nov. 13 at the Second Presbyterian Church in Carlisle.

Before the meeting started, Mrs. Walton gave a short demonstration about procedures of the meetings.

The club welcomed Clayton and Robbie Weber and Chris

Hinton to the meeting.

Under old business, Aaron Cornman reported on the Louisville Judging Team. The Pennsylvania Juniors placed third, and Aaron placed 16th individually. Some club members exhibited cattle in Louisville, and they did really well.

There was a Christmas Tree Committee report saying that Kmart didn't have the names of the children yet. The committee will meet when the names are available.

Mrs. Walton explained the new 2001 project books. The club decided the next meeting's program will be the gift exchange.

Three demonstrations were given. Mark Hammond demonstrated his wrestling moves and medals. Jen Zinn interviewed Jeff Reasoner for her year requirements. Morgan Creek informed us about Pennsylvania's symbols, like the state bird and animal.

Comments from parents were given, and the meeting was adjourned.

## 4-H Youth Awards

Bucks County 4-H recognized seven youth leaders recently by awarding the Junior Cloverleaf Award to outstanding 8- to 11-year-old members. The award is for 4-H club leadership, participation, variety of 4-H experiences, and community service.

Receiving the award were Melissa Boess, Warrington, and Juliana Peluso, Hartsville, both members of the 4-H Dairy and Doylestown Clubs. Boess is the daughter of Michael and Katey Boess. Peluso is the daughter of Frank and Mimi Peluso.

Natalie Crooke, Perkasia, and Gabrielle Ochoco, Doylestown are members of the Danboro 4-H Club. Crooke is the daughter of Jim and Gail Crooke.

Ochoco is the daughter of Filmore and Linda Ochoco.

Chrissy Dumire and Corinne Jager are members of both Hilltown 4-H Club and Carrot Crunchers 4-H Club. Dumire is the daughter of Tom and Cyndy Dumire. Jager is the daughter of Molly Jager.

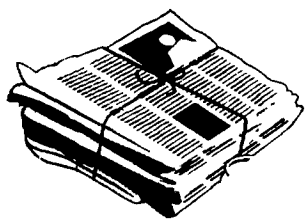
Elizabeth Nilsen, Coopersburg, is a member of Spurs N Burrs 4-H Horse and Pony Club. She is the daughter of James and Betsy Nilsen.

For more information on 4-H in Bucks County, call (215) 345-3283.



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