

# Picking the perfect Christmas tree

Real or artificial, the choice is up to you

**Deciding whether to go with a real Christmas tree or an artificial tree doesn't have to be a difficult decision if you know what you're getting into. That's why we put together this primer to help you make the choice that best fits your lifestyle. Just remember, selecting a Christmas tree can be as much fun for an adult as it is for a child if you allow it.**

## CONSIDERING A LIVE TREE?

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

**When considering a live tree, first ask yourself these questions:**

- How are you going to set it up?
- How are you going to dispose of it?
- Do you own or have access to a hand saw to cut the trunk of the tree to keep it fresh?
- Do you have a way of watering the tree so that you minimize possible damage to your carpet and/or hardwood flooring?
- Do you have space in your home for the tree that is not near a possible fire hazard?
- Does the Christmas tree seller accept credit cards? If not, this could be a sign that the merchant is trying to sell leftover trees.

### PICKING THE TREE

- Be careful when choosing your tree size. Trees may not appear as large outside in an open environment. Once in your house, it could be another story.
- Is the tree free of insects?
- Is the tree dirty?
- Has the tree been well cared for in transit; was it baled up for a long period of time; does the tree have broken branches?

### TYPES OF TREES

**Everyone has their own preference, but here are the Top 10 best selling Christmas trees:**

1. Fraser Fir
2. Douglas Fir
3. Balsam Fir
4. Colorado Blue Spruce
5. Scotch Pine
6. Eastern Red Cedar
7. White Spruce
8. Eastern White Pine
9. White Fir or Concolor Fir
10. Virginia pine

### TREE STAND

**Don't be cheap; buy a good one:**

- Stability is the key. Make sure it can hold a tree upright.
- Make sure it has good water capacity (should hold about one quart of water for each inch of stem diameter).
- Make sure it's easy to set up.

### TREE CARE

**Things to know:**

- A freshly cut, real Christmas tree is generally good for four to six weeks.
- A tree that has been cut for more than six to eight hours needs to have one-half inch cut off the butt end before

you place it in a tree stand and water it.

- If you buy a tree and don't plan to set it up for a few days or longer, store it in a cool location out of the wind and sun. Cut a half-inch from the end of the trunk and keep it in cool water.
- Lowering the room temperature keeps the tree fresher.
- Be sure to keep water in your tree stand. Trees typically take a lot of water the first week or two then slow down. A seven-foot tree may easily use two quarts of water a day for the first week.

### FIRE SAFETY TIPS

**Things to know:**

- Fresh trees are less likely to catch fire, so look for a tree with vibrant green needles that are hard to pluck and don't break easily from its branches. The tree shouldn't be shedding its needles readily.
- Always place your tree away from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights, and keep the tree base filled with water to avoid a dryout
- Make sure all your indoor and outdoor Christmas lights have been tested in a lab by the UL or ETL/ITSNA for safety and throw out any damaged lights.
- Any lights you use outdoors must be labeled suitable for exterior placement. Be sure to plug into a ground-fault circuit interrupter protected receptacle.
- Keep all your holiday candles away from your Christmas tree, surrounding furniture and décor.
- Bedtime means lights off. Don't forget to turn your Christmas tree light switch each night
- When your tree begins to drop its needles, it's time to say goodbye to your evergreen foliage until next year.

### TREE DISPOSAL

**Save yourself a mess by:**

- Being careful with the water bowl. You don't want to spill a large amount on your carpet or floor.
- When you're at your favorite place to buy decorations and you see a Christmas tree bag, buy it. When taking your tree down you can place it in these large plastic bags, sparing you the chore of picking up needles from the tree.



Fraser Fir



Douglas Fir



Balsam Fir



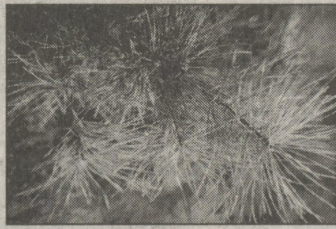
Colorado Blue Spruce



Scotch Pine



White Spruce



White Pine



Virginia Pine

## HOW ABOUT AN ARTIFICIAL TREE?

### THEY'RE LOOKING GOOD

Admittedly, artificial trees in the past looked nothing like the real thing, but now they look like genuine Christmas trees. Advances in artificial-tree design have helped many obtain the "perfect tree" for the holidays – without looking "too perfect."

**Consider these things when buying artificial Christmas trees:**

- First, think of an artificial Christmas tree as an investment. Because you may be keeping the tree for 20 years or more, you may consider purchasing a high-quality artificial tree that has foliage resembling a real Christmas tree. This is often determined by the quantity of the branch tips and design of the foliage. In most cases, having more branch "tips" is preferred because an abundance of needles creates a full look for the tree.
- Ensure the Christmas tree has the specific desired appearance. Look closely to see if you can see the center pole of the tree – if so, it may not be a high-quality tree
- Choose a tree with a strong stand to ensure that your Christmas tree will not topple or lean to one side, even if heavy ornaments are added to the tree. Some tree stands come with rubber feet to protect your car-

pet or your wooden floors

- All of the best artificial Christmas trees should have hinged branches to keep set-up simple

### REGARDING THAT SMELL FACTOR

Artificial Christmas trees may not smell as nice as a real tree, but along with that fresh pine smell from a real tree comes nearly 10 times the amount of mold normally found indoors. For those predisposed to allergies, this is no small matter.

### AND, KEEP IN MIND

- Artificial Christmas trees last much longer than live trees.
- Artificial Christmas trees are safer because they are not a fire hazard, nor do they drop needles that cause children to choke.
- Artificial Christmas trees come in all sizes, shapes and colors – and can fit any budget.
- You can be much more creative with your artificial Christmas tree design and how you decorate.
- Artificial Christmas trees don't make the mess and can't rot like live trees.
- There is no ongoing watering and cleaning with artificial Christmas trees.
- Artificial Christmas trees weigh much less and are easy to assemble and store away.

### CREDITS:

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### SOURCES:

National Christmas Tree Association / Purdue University Forestry and Natural Resources / About.com forestry

