



O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree!

It's the most wonderful time of the year! It's the Christmas season! I spent the Thanksgiving holiday helping my Mother gather Christmas decorations that will adorn our home for the holiday season. Over Thanksgiving dinner we talked

about trees that my grandparents would cut from the woods to serve as the Christmas tree for our family.

Many people love the fresh scent of a real tree. The most popular Christmas trees that are grown in Tennessee are Virginia pine, eastern white pine, eastern redcedar, Fraser fir and Scotch pine. The following are some tips for choosing and maintaining your Christmas tree:

1. **Be sure to measure the dimensions, including ceiling height, of the area where the tree will be placed. This will help you select the right size and shape of tree.**
2. **The easiest method to obtain a fresh tree is to choose one from a Tennessee Christmas tree grower. You may be surprised to know that there are many Christmas tree growers in Tennessee where you can choose and cut your own Christmas tree. A directory of Christmas tree growers can be obtained by contacting the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Marketing at (615) 837-5160.**
3. **Many of the precut trees sold on lots are often obtained from Michigan, Oregon, Colorado and New England as well as regionally in Tennessee and adjacent states. The reality is that these trees may have been cut 4 to 6 weeks before they appear on the lot. Make sure**

to test the tree for freshness by placing a branch between the thumb and forefinger of your hand. Pull your hand toward you allowing the branch to slip through your fingers. The needles should bend but not break, and adhere to the branch, not fall off. A second test is to lift the tree a few inches off the ground and drop it on the stump end. Some interior brown needles should fall but if green needles fall in abundance, find another tree.

4. In order to keep the tree fresh cut $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch off of the bottom trunk and immediately place it in water. Keep water in the tree stand at all times. A cut tree can absorb 2 to 3 quarts of water the first day indoors. Only use clean water in your stand.
5. Keep the tree in a cool area. Keep the tree away from fireplaces, heat registers, heaters and televisions. Inspect your Christmas tree lights for broken insulation or faulty sockets each year. Rule of thumb, always unplug tree lights when you are away from home and before you go to bed.



Fresh Christmas trees are beautiful, and there is nothing like the scent of an evergreen to put you in the holiday spirit. Follow these five simple rules to get the most from your fresh-cut tree!

Finally, don't forget the gardener on your gift list, as a gift certificate to a nursery, garden center or a subscription to a garden magazine will surely make your gardener happy this Christmas! Until next time, have a happy and prosperous holiday season!



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