



How Christmas Tree Farming Affects the Environment

In the past, most Christmas trees came from the forest; today over 98% are plantation grown. Christmas tree farms add oxygen to the atmosphere, provide wildlife habitat, increase soil stability, and are very attractive. Christmas trees are frequently planted on barren slopes or other cleared areas where no other crops will grow. Christmas trees take 4 – 10 years to mature, during which they face many dangers. Trees can suffer from too little or too much sun or rain; destruction by rodents, insects, disease, hail or fire; overgrowth from bushes, vines, and weeds; or theft from the field.

How to Select and Care for a Christmas Tree

- ✓ Do a freshness test. Gently grab a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull it towards you. Very few needles should come off in your hand if the tree is fresh. Shake or bounce the tree on its stump. You should not see an excessive amount of green needles fall to the ground. Some loss of interior brown needles is normal and will occur over the lifetime of the tree.
- ✓ Once you have chosen your tree, keep it in a sheltered, unheated area such as a porch or garage to protect it from the wind and sun until you are ready to decorate it.
- ✓ Before you set up your tree, make a fresh, straight cut along the base of the trunk (about a ¼ inch up from the original cut) and place the tree in a tree stand that holds at least one gallon of water.
- ✓ Warning: Keep the tree stand filled with water. A seal of dried sap will form over the cut stump in 4 to 6 hours if the water drops below the base of the tree, preventing the tree from absorbing water later when the tree stand is refilled. If a seal does form, another fresh cut will need to be made.
- ✓ A tree will absorb as much as a gallon of water or more in the first 24 hours and one or more quarts per day thereafter. Water is important because it prevents the needles from drying and dropping off and the boughs from drooping. Water also keeps the tree fragrant.
- ✓ Keep your tree away from direct sunlight, heat, and draft sources like fireplaces, radiators and television sets.
- ✓ Test your light cords before hanging them on the tree to make sure they are in good working order. You don't want to use cords with cracked insulation or broken or empty sockets.
- ✓ Be sure to unplug the lights before you go to bed or leave the house.
- ✓ Never overload electrical circuits.