



Christmas Tree History & Care

****Information provided by: Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association.****

CHRISTMAS TREE HISTORY AND TRADITION FACTS:

- The first recorded reference to the Christmas tree dates back to 16th century Germany.
- The tree, used as a symbol of life, is a tradition older than Christianity and not exclusive to any one Tradition has it that a young priest, who later became Saint Boniface, went to Northern Germany in the eighth century to convert the people there.. When he arrived he found them worshiping a huge oak tree because they believed there was a god within it, and they were preparing to sacrifice their young prince Olaf to the god. He stopped the sacrifice, chopped down the tree, and while living with them for a number of years, converted them to Christianity. One day as he was riding through the forest, there in the place where he had chopped down the big oak tree, was a beautiful evergreen tree. Because it stayed green all year round (it was "ever-living") and its top pointed toward Heaven, he called it the Christ-tree. Many years later, in the 16th century, Martin Luther brought an evergreen tree into the church to celebrate Jesus' birthday. Because the service

was called the Christ Mass, the tree became known as the Christmas tree. He was the first to put decorations on the tree-candles, and he told the people that the candle light should remind them of the star of Bethlehem that led the three wise men to the stable where Jesus was born.

- The tradition of the Christmas tree was brought to the United States by German settlers and Hessian soldiers paid to fight in the American Revolutionary War.
- In 1804 U. S. soldiers stationed at Fort Dearborn (now Chicago) hauled trees from the surrounding woods to their barracks at Christmas.
- In 1842, Charles Minnegrode introduced the custom of decorating trees in Williamsburg, Virginia.
- In 1851, Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds loaded with trees from the Catskill mountains to the streets of New York, and opened the first retail lot in the United States.
- Franklin Pierce, our 14th president, brought the Christmas tree tradition to the White House. President Calvin Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony in 1923.
- Since 1966, the winner of NCTA's (National Christmas Tree Association) "Most Perfect Christmas Tree Contest" has presented a beautiful, fresh Christmas tree to the President and First Family and it is displayed in the Blue Room of the White House each year.

CHRISTMAS TREE BENEFITS:

- One acre of real Christmas trees provides oxygen for 18 people through the photosynthesis process. Whereby a tree absorbs carbon dioxide then emits oxygen.
- Real Christmas trees provide a natural habitat for birds, rabbits and other wildlife.
- The Christmas tree “choose and cut” experience is a great way to begin the Christmas season. Start or renew your family traditions today.
- Fresh-cut Christmas trees hold their needles.
- Real Christmas trees are biodegradable.
- Real Christmas trees can be recycled. They can be shredded into mulch, used for refuges and feeding areas for fish ponds, used as bird feeders and installed as erosion barriers along beaches and shorelines.
- Christmas trees can be grown on land where other crops cannot be successfully grown.
- Virginia and Afghan pines are the most common Christmas trees grown in Texas.
- For every Christmas tree cut, there will be 2-3 seedlings planted.
- Thirty-six (36) million U.S. families will cut a Christmas tree this year.
- Prior to the 1950's, most family Christmas trees came from the forest. Today over 90% of Christmas trees are plantation grown.
- Christmas trees begin life in a nursery where superior seeds or cuttings are planted and grown to a seedling status.

CHRISTMAS TREE CARE & SAFETY:

- Real trees need water, just like a fresh bouquet of flowers.
- When you bring the tree home, make a fresh cut one-quarter inch or more above the original cut until you reach fresh wood. This removes the sap seal which prevents the tree from absorbing water.
- Immediately place the tree in a LARGE container of fresh water. Trees are very thirsty. A Christmas tree may drink one gallon or more of fresh water per day for the first few days, then decrease their intake.
- Check the water supply daily and replenish as needed.
- Until ready to decorate, keep the Christmas tree outdoors, protected from the wind and sun (always in water)!
- In the house, place the tree away from fireplaces and other heat sources.
- Carefully check all electric lights and connections before decorating the tree and home. Do not use lights with worn or frayed cords and NEVER use lighted candles.
- Be sure to turn off all decorations before retiring at night and at any time you leave home.