

Ag Column Article
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Real Trees Become Family Traditions

Another year has passed us by and we will soon be looking for a Christmas tree to decorate our homes. Many families enjoy trips to a tree farm to pick out their family Christmas tree. There are many Christmas tree farms within an afternoon's drive from our area. You can pick out your tree and have it cut fresh. You may also find pre-cut trees or live trees at the tree farm. If you don't have time for a road trip, then you can find trees at tree lots throughout our local area. These tree lots are often operated by community organizations as fundraisers.

There are advantages and disadvantages with each of these. If you are considering a tree that can be planted after the holidays, locally grown trees are more likely to survive in our area. Dr. David Merker, UT Extension Forestry Specialist, recommends the Eastern White Pine and the Norway Spruce for the East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia area. Many people like the Fraser Fir, but this tree will rarely survive for long-term at elevations less than 3000 feet. Some families enjoy cutting an Eastern Red Cedar from a local farm. The cedar, when fully decorated, looks nice and adds a fresh cedar smell to your home.

After you determine what kind of tree you want, Larry Tankersley, UT Extension Forestry Specialist, says that size is the most important consideration in selecting your tree. Remember to cut off at least 1 inch from the butt end of the tree to make sure that the cut is fresh and ready to take up water. You will regain part of this height when you place the tree in the stand.

Tankersley says trees should have a good green color, strong fragrance and the needles should be flexible. If the needles break when bent between your fingers, then consider another tree.

Keep the tree submerged in water throughout the holidays. There is no need to add any thing to the water for freshness. Tankersley also says that misting the tree with water will help to keep it fresh. This will help to limit the amount of moisture lost from the tree.

Make sure you place the tree away from heat ducts and other heat sources. Trees should be removed promptly after Christmas, especially if the tree's needles are dry and falling from the tree.

For more information on sources of local trees for the Christmas Holiday, call your local Extension office.