

# The First Christmas Trees

No one really knows who put up the first Christmas tree, but some historians believe that even the Egyptians and Romans used some form of an evergreen to decorate their homes in late December. It is generally agreed that the first use of a tree as part of the Christian Christmas celebration was started over 400 years ago in Germany.

The Christmas tree was brought to America by Hessian mercenaries who fought for the British during the Revolutionary War. Another early use of Christmas trees occurred in 1804, when US soldiers stationed at a fort near Chicago hauled trees to their barracks to celebrate Christmas.

In 1842, a German named Charles Minnegrode introduced the custom of decorated Christmas trees in Williamsburg, Virginia homes. His tree was described as being "splendidly decorated" with strings of popcorn, nuts, and lighted candles.

By 1900, one in five American families decorated trees during Christmas and by 1930, the tree had become a nearly universal part of Christmas in the United States.

Until the 1940's and 1950's, all Christmas trees were naturally grown trees harvested from the forests. Often a mature forest tree would be cut so that the top could be used as a Christmas tree. When Christmas tree growers started growing plantations or fields of trees just for Christmas in the 1950's and 1960's, they truly began growing a renewable resource that can be passed on from generation to generation.

## Real Tree Facts & Figures

- ▲ Real Christmas trees are an all-American product, farm grown and environmentally friendly.
- ▲ There are about 15,000 Christmas tree growers in the US and over 100,000 people who work either part or full time in the Christmas tree industry.
- ▲ It can take as many as 15 years to grow a Christmas tree to maturity, but the average growing time for all species is 7 years.
- ▲ The top Christmas tree producing states are Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and California.
- ▲ Before the 1950's, most family Christmas trees came from the forest; today over 98% are farm grown.
- ▲ There are about 1 million acres of Christmas trees growing on farms across the country.

After 1 year, the North Carolina Fraser Fir seedling is still only the height of a quarter.



In the line-out bed, the tree begins to grow parallel branches.

The tree in the field now begins to have a tapered shape.

During the next few years, the tree will fill out and nearly double in height.



# Helping the Environment

Did you ever think that by using a live Christmas tree in your home that you were actually helping the environment? Real trees help the environment from the time they are planted until after the holiday season when they can be recycled.

While they are growing, Christmas trees support life by absorbing carbon dioxide and other gases while giving off fresh oxygen. Every acre of Christmas trees planted gives off enough oxygen to meet the needs of 18 people. Today in America there are enough Christmas trees planted that 18 million people a day are supplied with oxygen. Also, the farms that grow Christmas trees help to stabilize soil, protect water supplies and provide a refuge for wildlife. Often, Christmas trees are grown on soil that will not support other crops; and when a Christmas tree is cut down, new seedlings are replanted in its place.

Artificial trees are made from petroleum-based products that use up our natural resources. They are also not recyclable and will remain in landfills for centuries after disposal.

Real Christmas trees, on the other hand, are recyclable. The branches and trunk are biodegradable and can be made into mulch for the garden. A Christmas tree placed in the back yard will make a nice bird feeder and the birds can also use the tree branches for shelter during the winter winds. Large quantities of trees make effective barriers on beaches to prevent soil erosion. Sunk into ponds, the trees will also make an excellent refuge and feeding area for fish.

# Tree Safety

Christmas trees do not start house fires, people do. Here are some helpful hints that will help you and your family enjoy the Christmas season and your North Carolina Fraser Fir Christmas tree to the fullest.

Always make a fresh cut at the base of the tree immediately prior to putting it in the stand. Cut approximately one-half inch off, cutting straight across the trunk.

Fill the stand with fresh water and keep it full. Check the water level regularly. A tree will often absorb over a gallon of water the first day that it is in the house. No additives are needed, just plenty of fresh, clean water.

Check all lights and wiring for broken bulbs and frayed wires. Don't overload electrical outlets.

Place your North Carolina Fraser Fir Christmas Tree away from fireplaces, heaters, vents, and other sources of heat or drafts.

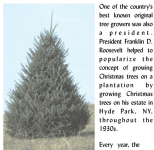


# A Washington Tradition

It did not become an established tradition to have a tree until the 1880's.

When Theodore Roosevelt was in office, he banned Christmas trees from the White House because he thought that Christmas tree harvesting was depleting our National forests. His two young sons brought one into the White House and were sent to the most famous conservationist of this time, Gifford Pinchot, for a lecture. Mr. Pinchot defended the cutting of Christmas trees by saying that for every tree cut down, two are replanted, which actually replenished the forests.

The National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony began in 1923. President Calvin Coolidge started what has become an annual holiday observance on the White House lawn by lighting the first National Christmas tree.



One of the country's best known original tree growers was also a president. President Franklin D. Roosevelt helped to popularize the concept of growing Christmas trees on a plantation by growing Christmas trees on his estate in Hyde Park, NY, throughout the 1930's.

Every year, the National Christmas Tree Association holds a Christmas Tree Competition. Winners of this competition provide the Christmas tree for the White House. The North Carolina Fraser Fir has won this competition more than any other species.



Keeping Christmas Real  
Since 1959

Always turn off lights before going to bed or leaving home.

Concerned about allergies? Try washing the tree off with a garden hose before bringing it into the house.

Remember: a fresh cut, plenty of water, and a bit of common sense will help you and your family have a joyous and SAFE holiday season!

