



Field Guide to Cut Christmas Trees

from FamilyChristmasOnline™

These are general guidelines on the tree types you are most likely to encounter at cutting farms and tree lots. This information is provided in this format for your convenience only. The descriptions below assume that the trees are in fresh condition when you pick them out.

In addition, tree selections will vary in your area, and you are responsible for choosing your tree wisely, setting it up safely, and taking care of it. Please see our page of "Tips for Cut Christmas Tree Safety" for more information.



Tree	Needle Color	Needle Length	Needle Stiffness	Holds Ornaments Well	Needle retention	Fragrance
Scotch Pine	Dark-Green	1-3"	Medium, not too prickly when fresh	Good	Excellent	Good, stays fragrant for days
Frasier Fir	Silver-Blue on outside, Deep Blue-Green inside	1/2" - 1"	Soft when fresh	Very good, has many small, strong tips	Very Good	Excellent
Canaan Fir	Silver-Blue to Deep Blue-Green	3/4" - 1 1/4"	Soft when fresh	Very good	Good	Very good
Balsam Fir	Dark Silvery Green	3/4" - 1 1/2"	Stiff	Very good	Good	Very Good
Douglas Fir	Deep Green	1"	Stiff	Very good	Good	Very good
White Pine	Green	2-5"	Very soft	Poor, branches may be too soft to hold some ornaments	Good	Fair-may be the best for families with plant allergies
Blue Spruce	Silver-green on outside, power blue or blue-green inside	3/4" - 2"	Stiff, "prickly"	Very good, will hold heavy ornaments	Fair, do not like warm rooms	Good
Black Hills Spruce	Gray-green on outside, blue-green on inside	About 1/2"	Stiff, "prickly"	Very good	Fair, do not like warm rooms	Good
White Fir	Green	1/2 - 1 1/2"	Soft when fresh	Good	Good	Good
Austrian Pine	Deep Blue-Green	3-6"	Medium	Fair, needle length requires long ornament hooks	Good	Good
White Spruce	Green	1/2" - 1"	Somewhat prickly	Good	Good	Good
Norway Spruce	Dark Green	1/2" - 1"	Medium	Good	Poor - not recommended for warm rooms	Very good
Eastern Red Cedar	Dark Green	1/4" - 1/2"	Very prickly	Poor, branches are too vertical and weak to hold some ornaments	Poor, dries out quickly	Good



Tips for Cut Christmas Tree Safety

from Family Christmas Online™

These are general guidelines for keeping your cut tree safe. This information is provided in this format for your convenience only. The descriptions below assume that the trees are in fresh condition when you pick them out. In addition, tree selections will vary in your area, and you are responsible for choosing your tree wisely, setting it up safely, and taking care of it.



People who set up their tree correctly and take care of it almost never have problems, and they get to enjoy the appearance and scent of a natural tree during the holidays. On the other hand, a tree that is allowed to get very dry is a dangerous fire hazard. For that reason, you'll need to pay attention to two major factors related to tree safety:

- **Keep the tree as fresh as possible so it's less likely to catch fire if it is exposed to flame** - Doing this requires choosing a fresh tree, setting it up correctly, placing it away from things that radiate heat (like registers and television sets), and making certain the reservoir never runs out.
- **Keep the tree away from things that could cause combustion** - This includes real candles, old-fashioned lights that get hot, cigarettes, overloaded wiring, and worn extension cords. It also includes gradual sources of heat (like television sets) that wouldn't ordinarily be a problem, except that, over several days, they can dry the tree out enough to catch fire with just the gradual build-up of heat.

Choose Your Tree Carefully

Look for long-lasting species - If your tree is going to be in a warm room and/or set up for more than ten days, consider a tree with excellent needle retention, like a Scotch Pine or Frasier Fir.

Check your choice carefully - Wiggle the branches of the trees you are considering to make sure they're still supple and that the needles are still flexible. When you find a tree you like, pick it up a few inches in the air and drop it on the trunk. There will be a rain of brown needles from inside the tree. This is normal. Do it again. Be ready to pass if:

- The tree seems very lightweight for its size,
- The tree starts looking perceptibly thinner as you bump it,
- The pile of needles keeps growing much larger after the first bump, or
- Green needles fall off in any number.

Make the final cut - Right before you put your tree in the stand, cut off at least an inch of trunk to get to the part that will still absorb water. If you have to shave off some of the diameter of the tree to fit it into your stand, leave as much of the bark as you can.

Put your tree up promptly - Once you've made your "final" cut, try to get the tree into the stand and water into the reservoir within an hour (some people say you have up to six hours, but I'd rather have the tree absorbing water sooner than later).

Other safety tips:

- Use lights that generate little or no heat, like the mini-lights (little) or the LEDs (almost none).
- Make certain light strands and extension cords are in good condition and not overloaded. And make certain the cords aren't running somewhere that will trip people or that let people walk on them.
- Make certain that the tree is several feet away from sources of heat, like registers and television sets.
- Always unplug your tree when you are not in the room with it, especially when you are going to be away from the tree for any period of time.
- Top off the water every morning and evening. When the tree stops taking water, that's a sign that it is not long for this world.
- At least once a day, wiggle the branches to see if the branch tips and needles are still supple. Any of the following signs mean that the tree is becoming especially dangerous:
 - The branch tips become stiff, or, worse yet, brittle,
 - Needles near the branch tips are starting to turn brown, or
 - Many needles fall every time the tree is jostled.