



Choosing a Christmas Tree

As many of us choose this weekend to find that perfect tree to decorate our home, take the time to consider the following. Different types of trees offer different advantages/disadvantages.

Eastern White Pine – This tree has incredibly soft and long needles. Its ‘fluffy’ look is a favorite of many, but its soft needles are not well suited for heavy ornaments; they’ll slip right off. The best white pine I’ve ever seen decorated was with strings and strings of lights with just a few ornaments. It was stunning!

Scotch Pine – Scotch Pine is a popular choice, especially in Nebraska. Needles are shorter and stiffer than a white pine, so it’s much more appropriate for ornaments. Needles are usually dark green, and very attractive.

Blue Spruce – Many of you might have these growing in a windbreak, or somewhere in the landscape. If so, you’re probably familiar with its blue-green color, and strong conical shape. It’s a great tree for outdoors, as well as a Christmas tree choice.

There are a number of fir trees available; **Balsam Fir**, **Canaan Fir**, **Douglas Fir**, and **Fraser Fir**. All have needles about 1-1 1/2” long with varying shades of medium to dark green. Fraser Fir needles are silver on the underside. Firs generally have good needle retention, and have grown in popularity for Christmas trees. All Christmas trees range in price depending on the variety of tree, and its size.

When you’re choosing a live Christmas tree this year, keep a few things in mind. First of all, the fresher the better, ask where the trees came from. There are many Christmas trees in Nebraska alone, so the less time the trees spend on a semi, the better! When you’re looking at a tree, shake it a little and see if needles fall off. If the needles are brown, and seem to come from near the trunk, that’s ok! Natural needle shed is normal in all evergreens, whether they’re cut, or actively growing in the landscape. If, however, green needles drop from the outside, it might not be a very fresh tree.

Once you get your tree home, make a new cut at the base, removing at least an inch of trunk. Immediately put the tree in a bucket of water, or the tree stand where it’s going to be displayed. The tree will use a lot of water, especially in the first couple of weeks you have it inside, so check the water daily.

Choosing a Christmas tree each year can easily become a tradition that you and your family enjoy. I grew up on a farm in central Nebraska. Each year, my parents and sisters would pile into the pick-up and we would drive through our pastures until we found a cedar tree we would choose for our Christmas tree. At the time, of course, it was the most perfect, beautiful tree, and the search for the tree was just as important as the final pick. Looking at pictures of Christmases past as an adult I can see

what I couldn't see as a child – cedar trees are ugly! They were brown-tinted and incredibly irregular in shape. My point though, is that no matter what kind of tree you choose to bring home for Christmas, if you and your family choose it, it will be perfect.

Natalia Bjorklund is an extension educator for UNL, serving Dodge County. If you have any horticulture questions, feel free to contact her at the office at 1206 W. 23rd, Fremont. You can also call or email at 402.727.2775 or natalia.bjorklund@unl.edu