

LIFESTYLES

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North Carolina Christmas trees are a holiday tradition

Tar Heel Christmas tree facts

North Carolina has an estimated 50 million Fraser fir Christmas trees growing on over 25,000 acres.

Fraser fir represents over 90% of all species grown in North Carolina.

Fraser fir is grown in the far Western North Carolina counties which include Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

There are over 2,500 North Carolina growers.

North Carolina has over 10 Christmas Tree Associations.

The North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry is ranked second in the nation in number of trees harvested and first in the nation in terms of dollars made per tree.

North Carolina produces over 15% of the Real Christmas Trees in the U.S.

The North Carolina Fraser fir has been judged the Nation's best through a contest sponsored by the National Christmas Tree Association and chosen for the official White House Christmas tree 8 times (more than any other species)....1991, 1973, 1982, 1985, 1991, 1995 and 1997.

The North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America and is shipped into every state in the U.S. as well as the Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, Japan and other points all over the world.

There are over 400 Choose and Cut Christmas tree farms in North Carolina.

Currently the number of Christmas trees growing in North Carolina would supply the daily oxygen supply for the entire population of greater Charlotte area.

Christmas trees are recyclable as coastline barriers against erosion, in lakes and ponds for fish nesting and as mulch for gardens.

The tree fields also provide habitat for small wildlife.

It takes as many as 12 years to grow a tree of average retail height which is 6-7 feet.

For each North Carolina Fraser fir harvested, there is at least one transplant put back in its place.

The North Carolina Christmas Tree Association, located in Boone, NC, has nearly 400 members.

The association annually publishes a Wholesale Buy & Sell Guide each spring, a

Choose & Cut Guide each fall and Limbs & Needles, a quarterly magazine for the Southeast Christmas tree industry.

National Christmas Tree Facts

Real Christmas trees are an all-American product, grown in all 50 states, including Alaska and Hawaii.

There are about 15,000 Christmas tree growers in the U.S. 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 1950s, most family Christmas trees came from the forest. Today over 98% are plantation grown.

There are about 1 million acres of growing Christmas trees.

Christmas Trees haven't always been a Christmas Tradition.

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 by the Germans.

The Christmas tree was brought to America by the Hessian mercenaries that were paid to fight for the British during the Revolutionary War.

In 1804, soldiers stationed at a fort near Chicago hauled trees to their barracks during Christmas.

In 1842, a German named Charles Minnegerode 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 the American Christmas.

Growing and Harvesting

Have you ever wondered where all the Christmas trees that show up on the lots around Thanksgiving come from?

These trees are grown on plantations and shipped around the country to retail lots. It takes many years of hard work to produce a tree that is just right to become a Christmas tree.

Christmas trees begin their life in a nursery. Here, seeds are taken from cones of mature trees, planted and covered with straw. They are also covered with a shade cloth to prevent them from being damaged by frost or sun.

At harvest time, growers identify finished trees by placing a ribbon on them. The ribbons are color coded with each height being assigned a different color.

Often a whole field is not ready for sale in any one year. It often takes two to four years before a field is cleared and ready for new trees to be planted.

Be Safe With Your Tree

Christmas trees do not start fires, people do!

Here are some helpful hints so that you and your family can enjoy the Christmas season and your Fraser fir tree to the fullest.

Check all electric lights and connections before decorating.

Don't use any lights with worn or frayed cords.

NEVER use lighted candles on your tree.

Don't overload the electrical outlets.

Place your tree away from fireplaces, radiators, television sets, and other heat sources. These elements can prematurely dry out your tree.

Always make sure that your tree has plenty of water to prevent drying.

ALWAYS turn off all decorations before going to bed at night or anytime that you leave home.

Sensible precautions like these will help you and your family have a safe and happy holiday season.

Source: North Carolina Christmas Tree Association



Photo courtesy of NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

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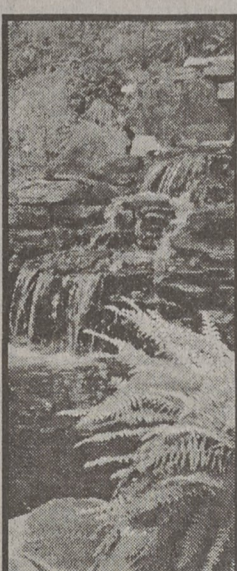
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