

Christmas Tradition

How To Choose A Christmas Tree: Tips From Expert Arborist Mark Chisholm

(NAPS)—There's more to decking the halls with just the right Christmas tree than many people realize. Here are seven hints that can help:

Select Your Location

Before you head to the lot or store to pick out this year's tree, you must be certain of where you want to place the tree and the space available. Try to avoid spots near heat sources such as radiators, fireplaces, heating vents and even televisions or sun-drenched windows. Also, try to tuck the tree into a low-traf-

fic area to avoid accidental bumping and possible safety issues. Next, you'll need to measure the space dimensions you have to work with, bearing in mind that a tree stand will add a few extra inches of height, as will a star or angel to finish the top.

the tree looks very full while absent of ornaments, it may be difficult to decorate. Most trees that end up on a lot have been groomed and sheared to look great during the selection process. Then you get it home and realize that there's very little space for ornaments. Choosing one with some empty spaces might be a better route. You could bring a few of your favorite ornaments with you to test at the store. Also, be sure that the first foot of trunk is straight, or you could have one heck of a time getting it to stand up correctly at home.



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Consider a Charitable Tree Lot

If you're like me and look forward to contributing to the spirit of the season while picking a tree, you can look for charitable lots. One I like to shop at donates all of its proceeds to a children's hospital. Another option would be to get an extra tree and then donate it to a family that can't afford one or to an organization that will find that tree the right home.

Select the Right Tree for You

At the lot you will likely see three or four common varieties of trees. Some things to consider when choosing are the color, shape and feel of the tree. Some trees are dark green, and others have gray or white shades. There are trees with tight branching patterns and some with more spaces. One thing to remember is that if

Try a Live Tree

Balled and burlap or container trees can be a nice choice for a live tree. It will be heavier and need more diligent care once home. After the holidays are over, it can be added to the landscape. One extra step you'll need to adopt is assessing the planting space for proper growing space, sunlight and watering needs. Make sure the species you choose will thrive where you plant it.

Test Your Tree for Freshness

Once you have the look you want, you'll need to test the tree for freshness. Trees that are on a lot could have been cut and shipped weeks earlier. Look for greener trees with no signs of wilting or browning. What can be tricky is that many trees have undergone a colorizing treatment before they were shipped. That's why a quick pull test is next on my list. Grab a limb or two and pull them toward you. Release the limb slowly, letting it pull through your hand. A fresh tree will keep most or all of its needles in this test and the limb will not feel brittle or snap. Flexibility in the limbs is a must if the tree is to remain green for the next few weeks indoors. The final test is a quick drop test. Lift the tree a few inches off the ground and then let the butt of the tree hit the ground. That quick shock will release any dry needles and give you a good feel for how fresh the tree truly is. Don't worry about a few needles letting loose within the interior.

Prepare Your Tree for Indoors

Once you pick your tree and truck it home, make a fresh cut at the base,



Taking seven steps can help you get the right Christmas tree for your home and family.

unless it was already done for you. One thing I like to do before I bring my tree inside is to take out my STIHL blower and give the tree a quick blast to remove any loose needles, debris wedged in the branches and, most importantly, remove any insects or egg masses that might have survived the journey.

Recycle Your Tree

After Christmas is over, you'll need to dispose of the family tree. There are many recycling programs all over the country that account for the recycling of 93% of all trees nationally. Most get ground into mulch to be given back to the community or used as mulch in flower beds and parks. Some places have extensive erosion programs that take advantage of this biodegradable resource. Check websites such as RealChristmas-Trees.org for more information.

Learn More

For further facts on tree care, go to www.stihlusa.com/information/how-to-guides/tips-for-choosing-real-christmas-trees/.

About Mark Chisholm

One part acrobat, one part expert rope climber, one part tree physiologist, and several parts competitor and thrill seeker, Mark Chisholm is a third-generation certified arborist with his family owned Aspen Tree Expert Company and STIHL Inc. spokesperson.