



# Michigan Christmas Trees

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Photo credit: Jill O'Donnell



Fraser fir is the most prevalent Christmas tree species grown in Michigan.

Christmas trees offer consumers a great opportunity to buy local because Michigan ranks as the third leading producer in the nation. Michigan's climate and soils allow our Christmas tree growers to produce a wider variety of trees than any other state, offering a variety of shapes, colors and even scents to choose from. The most common Christmas tree species produced in Michigan are Fraser fir, Scotch pine, Colorado blue spruce, Douglas-fir, Concolor fir and Canaan fir. Each of these species has characteristics that make it well-suited to grow under Michigan conditions and contributes to its suitability as a Christmas tree.

## Picking the perfect tree

Whether you choose a precut tree at a local tree lot or bundle up the family for a choose-and-cut experience, you will find a wide array of tree types that offer something for everyone. Selecting the perfect Christmas tree can be a fun and memorable tradition, particularly if you take into account some important considerations.

Before setting out to get your tree, determine where in your house the tree will be located, the size of tree you need and whether all sides will be displayed.

When selecting a precut tree, make sure that the tree is fresh by testing how firmly the needles are attached to the branches. The easiest way to evaluate this is to lightly grasp the branch of the tree and gently pull the branch and needles through your hand. If the tree is fresh, very few

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Some area farms offer the opportunity to cut your own tree.

needles will come off. Of course, if you are cutting a tree yourself, you will still want to look the tree over carefully for signs of overall quality. Needles should not shed easily or be discolored.

If given proper care, a fresh Christmas tree should last the entire holiday season without becoming excessively dry or dropping a large number of needles. Be sure to place the tree in water as soon as possible and keep it out of direct sunlight and away from heat sources such as furnace vents and radiators. If the tree was cut more than a day before you purchased it, you should trim a 1- to 2-inch piece off the bottom of the trunk so the tree can readily take up water. This helps ensure continued quality. Be sure the container holds enough water, and refill it often, making sure the water does not fall below the level of the trunk bottom.

Cut Christmas trees will absorb a surprising amount of water, particularly during the first week. Generally, trees will use 1 quart of water per inch of trunk diameter, so a tree with a 4-inch diameter trunk may use more than 1 gallon per day. Though there are many commercial products and home remedies claimed to help keep a tree fresh, research has shown that the best additive is just plain water and plenty of it.

## Safety considerations

For safety, place the Christmas tree well away from heat registers, space heaters, fireplaces, wood stoves, televisions and other heat and ignition sources. When using decorations or trimmings, always keep small children and pets in mind, and make sure the tree is sturdily mounted in its stand. Electric lights should be checked thoroughly for safety and defects before use by looking for frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections. Use only UL-approved electrical decorations and extension cords. Do not leave tree lights on when the tree is unattended.

## Recycling

When the holiday season is complete and you are ready to take down the tree, be sure to recycle it! With more than 30 million trees harvested annually, there is a huge opportunity to have a positive impact on the environment by ensuring that your tree doesn't end up in a landfill at the end of the holiday season. The National Christmas Tree Association points out that trees may be "upcycled" in your landscape as mulch or protection for sensitive plants, or put next to your bird feeders to provide cover for birds and other wildlife. If you have a compost pile, you can also

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compost your tree. Just be sure to chip or break down the tree so that it can be incorporated into the pile and break down in a reasonable time frame.

In addition, communities handle tree recycling in a number of ways, including curbside pick-up for recycling, recycling center drop-off, mulching programs and nonprofit pick-up. In many areas, sanitation services collect trees during the weeks following Christmas. Check with your waste

removal service to see if this is an option. Many counties also have free drop-off locations, check with your county for more information. Tree recycling/mulching programs have increased in recent years — your local department of public works can tell you whether this service is available in your area. Public works will also be aware of any nonprofit organizations in your area that would pick up your tree (often for a small fee).

*Photo credit Jill O'Donnell*



Be sure to use a tree stand that can accommodate enough water for your tree. The stand should provide 1 quart of water for each inch of trunk diameter, or a gallon of water per day for a 4-inch diameter tree trunk.

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