Celebrating with Christmas Trees

Ways to make this time-honored tradition more enjoyable

Before you buy your tree

- Choosing between real and artificial? If it's a matter of sustainability, consider this: 40 million new trees were planted in 2008. That's ½ million* acres in production – a lot of green space!
- What are you going to decorate with? Heavy ornaments require sturdier trees.
- Living Christmas trees are more expensive, but they can become a part of your landscape.

At the lot: Tests for freshness

- Ask the lot manager how recently the tree arrived.
- Drop the trunk base on the ground; only a very few needles should fall.
- Look for fresh, sticky sap flow out of the trunk base.
- Run the needles through your hand. Do they feel dry or brittle?
- Needle retention (good to not as good): Pines, Firs, Spruces

At home: Caring for your tree

- Cut at least ½ inch off the base of the trunk a couple hours before placing the tree in water. This removes the sap plug that formed after it was cut on the farm.
- Keep the tree wet! Check the water several times each day. If the level falls below the base, a new plug will form and the tree will need to be recut – a major pain!
- Don't bother with preservatives; research shows they don't do any good.
- Keep the tree away from heat sources like direct sun, heater vents, fireplaces, etc.

*Source: 2002 Agriculture Census and the National Christmas Tree Association

What to do with a real tree after the holidays

- Put it in your backyard for wildlife habitat.
- Cut branches off; use them to cover perennial flowers.
- Needles can make great potpourri.
- Take it to Busch Wildlife or Rockwoods Reservation to use it as a fish habitat in ponds. Contact Missouri Department of Conservation: www.mdc.mo.gov.
- Your waste hauler will take it to a yard waste facility.
- Recycling locations: www.stlouisco.com/doh/waste/RRRDuringHolidaysWebsite.pdf

Nathan Brandt, MS
Horticulture Specialist
314-615-7610
BrandtN@missouri.edu
http://extension.missouri.edu/stlouis

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Extension
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