



Media Release

Real vs. fake Christmas trees

Real Christmas trees are the environmentally friendly choice

(Toronto, ON, December 6, 2011) Today marks the annual Christmas Tree Presentation to the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Each year, the Ontario Forestry Association (OFA) donates a Christmas tree and hosts a corresponding lighting ceremony. The trees are generously provided by Somerville Nurseries Inc. of Everette, Ontario. Students in the OFA's education programs, including Ontario Envirothon and Tree Bee Champions, will be recognized for their achievements and will present the tree to the Lieutenant Governor during the lighting ceremony. Attached is a photo of last year's tree.

As stores stock up on Christmas decorations and play the jingles, it reminds Canadians that Christmas is around the corner. As an enjoyable family tradition, many of us like to put up Christmas trees in our homes. Likewise, many of us ask ourselves, "Should we get a real tree this year?"

The Ontario Forestry Association thinks you should, as it is the environmentally friendly choice.

Christmas trees in Canada are grown on farms specifically for the Christmas season. When trees are harvested, Christmas tree farmers plant new seedlings to grow trees for the future holiday season. More than 500 farmers produce over one million Christmas trees each year. Not only do these trees serve the consumer, but it also provides habitat for wildlife and retains soil and water, preventing seasonal runoff.

Christmas tree plantations are carbon sinks, soaking up carbon dioxide emitted by cars, planes and our homes. Furthermore, one acre of planted Christmas trees produces oxygen for 18 people every day! The trees are 100 per cent biodegradable, and after Christmas the trees are mulched and are used in municipal parks. Pharmaceutical companies in Ontario also extract ingredients from tree needles for flu vaccines.

On the other hand, the manufacturing and transportation of non-biodegradable fake Christmas trees requires large amounts of fossil fuels. In addition, they are not biodegradable and increase waste in the landfills.

When it comes to decorating your tree, be sure to use LED lights. LEDs use 90% less electricity than traditional incandescent seasonal lights, and lasts up to 10 times longer!

Contrary to popular belief, Christmas trees are relatively easy to get. If you live in a city, many large grocery stores and hardware stores carry them. If you want to get hands on, go to a Christmas tree farm to choose and cut your own tree.

Lastly, don't forget about the sweet aroma from real Christmas trees. Nothing can beat the familiar scent that only nature can provide.

If you are convinced a real Christmas tree is your choice, here are a few tips on how to choose and take care of your tree.

Choosing a real Christmas tree:

- The most common trees used during the holidays include pine, fir, and spruce. Spruce tend to lose their needles first, fir are somewhat slower.
- Upon deciding the type and size of Christmas tree, make sure your tree is fresh. A freshly cut tree will last longer and its needles will stay on the branches, instead of your floor.
- While checking the lot for a fresh tree, make sure that the trunk has some sap coming out of it.
- Look for a tree that does not have brown needles. The needles of pine and spruce should bend and not break. They should also be hard to pull off the branches.
- Raise the tree just a few inches and drop it on the base of the trunk. Shake it a little if you can. Few needles should drop off. If they do, your tree may have been cut too long ago and has already dried out.

Caring for your cut tree:

- With a saw, remove a two centimeter disk of wood from the bottom of the trunk, providing a clean cut that allows the tree to absorb water.
- Ensure that your tree has adequate water. Display your tree away from direct heat to maintaining moisture and the fresh look of the tree.
- Some people add floral preservatives, aspirin and even honey to tree stand water, but there is no evidence that these provide any benefit.

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To arrange interviews, or for more information about real Christmas trees, contact:

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For more details about the OFA and its programs, visit www.oforest.ca

*The **Ontario Forestry Association** is a non-profit, registered charity dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of Ontario's forests, and to developing stewardship of forest ecosystems.*

