



Holiday debate: Ontarians split on environmental merits of real vs. fake Christmas trees

In addition to the usual dispute as to one's yearly naughty-or-nice status, this holiday season there is another cause for debate. Public opinion is divided between the Christmas tree choices: real or fake.

A recent poll shows Ontarians are almost evenly split on whether they consider an artificial or real tree to be the most environmentally friendly. The November 2012 poll from Oraclepoll Research Limited shows that 46% of Ontarians believe the "green" choice to be artificial, while 42% sided with real trees.

The Ontario Forestry Association (OFA) would like to help swing the debate in favour of the real Christmas tree. After all, it is the environmentally friendly choice.

Christmas trees in Canada are grown on farms specifically for the Christmas season. More than 500 Ontario farmers produce over one million Christmas trees each year. When trees are harvested, Christmas tree farmers plant new seedlings to grow trees for the future holiday season. As not all trees are harvested at the same time, these farms provide continuous habitat for wildlife, and retain soil and water, preventing seasonal runoff.

Christmas tree farms are carbon sinks, soaking up carbon dioxide emitted by cars, planes and our homes. One acre of planted Christmas trees provides the oxygen required by 18 people every day. The trees are 100 per cent biodegradable and, after the holidays, the trees are mulched and are used in municipal parks. Pharmaceutical companies in Ontario also extract ingredients from tree needles for flu vaccines. For more information on the benefits of real Christmas trees visit OFA's [website](#).

On the other hand, the manufacturing and transportation of imported fake Christmas trees requires large amounts of fossil fuels. The fake trees are not biodegradable, which increases waste in landfills as people do not keep their trees forever. Artificial Christmas trees will become centuries-long residents of municipal landfills.

When asked, "This Holiday season, do you plan to buy and put up a real tree or an artificial tree?" 49% of respondents said artificial, while 32% said real. But, Ontarians are ahead of United States residents in this sense. The response for real trees from Ontarians is almost 10% higher than the 23% of U.S. households who bought live Christmas trees in 2010, as reported in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The main reasons for the poll respondents choosing real trees were: environmentally friendly (32%); tradition (27%); and family activity (17%). It was interesting to note that the use of real trees is most popular from respondents in Toronto, Hamilton/Niagara and Central/Northern Ontario.

For residents in the Toronto area looking to spend some time with their family and pick up a real tree this holiday season, the OFA recommends that you get your real tree and support their partner, Trees Ontario, at the same time. Trees Ontario will be selling trees from November 30th to December 16th at the Toronto Christmas Market in the Distillery District. You can also cut your own tree at one of the many tree farms across Ontario.

For more information, or to schedule interviews, please 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.*

Polling questions were commissioned by the Ontario Forestry Association. The 1,000 person survey was conducted between November 21st and November 23rd, 2012. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%, 19/20 times.



The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario's Annual Christmas tree. Courtesy of Ontario Forestry Association.