



Get real to celebrate National Christmas Tree Day on December 8th

Three Ontario groups offer tips for those looking to make the better environmental choice this holiday season

December 7, 2012 - Ontario Forestry Association, Trees Ontario and Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario are all doing their part to spread the word about the environmental benefits of having a real Christmas tree.

Recent polling shows that Ontarians are almost evenly split when asked if real or artificial trees are the more environmentally friendly choice.

While the groups would like to see the numbers skew a little more in favour of natural trees, the survey results provide reason for hope.

In time for National Christmas Tree Day on December 8th, the three groups are spreading a coordinated message: "Real Christmas trees are the environmental choice."

To see the benefits of choosing a real tree, visit: http://www.oforest.ca/index.php/page_05a20.

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

"With the abundance of fake trees in stores, it is encouraging to see so many Ontarians continue to use real trees," said Carla Grant, Executive Director of the Ontario Forestry Association. "While we remain very committed to spreading our message, we are very impressed with Ontarians' knowledge about the environmental benefits of real trees."

Trees Ontario is selling natural trees until December 16th at the Toronto Christmas Market in the Distillery District.

"There is genuine excitement from visitors at the Market looking for real Christmas trees," Rob Keen, CEO, Trees Ontario. "Add to this the ability to buy local, along with the economic and environmental benefits, this is a holiday tradition we can expect to grow stronger in the years to come."

You can also cut your own tree at one of the many tree farms across Ontario.

"Nothing says Christmas more than a real tree," concluded Shirley Brennan, Executive Director at Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario. "There's something special about a real tree – the aroma, the beauty, and the memories of getting it and decorating it with your loved ones."

Tips for Choosing a Real Christmas Tree

Decide you want a real Christmas tree but don't know how to pick the best one? Below are some helpful hints to make choosing your Christmas tree less stressful:

- Pine, fir and spruces are all common Christmas tree options. Spruce trees tend to lose their needles the fastest whereas fir trees shed their needles somewhat slower.
- If you are purchasing a pre-cut tree make sure it is fresh. A freshly cut tree will last longer and its needles will stay on the branches, not fall on your floor.
- To check if a tree is fresh look for sap and/or moisture on the cut (found at the base of the trunk). Also avoid trees with brown needles.
- The needles of pine and spruce trees should bend not break and they should be hard to pull from the branches.
- If possible, raise the tree just a few inches off the ground and drop it on the base of the trunk. Few needles should drop off. If many needles drop off, your tree may have been cut too long ago and already dried out.

Caring for Your Real Christmas Tree

Now that you have chosen a real Christmas tree, there are a few things you can do to make it last the whole holiday season:

- With a saw, remove a two-centimetre disk of wood from the bottom of the trunk. This will provide a clean cut through which the tree will absorb water.
- Ensure that the tree has adequate water.
- Display the tree away from direct heat to maintain moisture and the fresh look of the tree.
- Some people will add floral preservatives, aspirin or even honey to tree stand water, however there is no evidence that doing this will extend the life of a real Christmas tree.
- With any tree, real or artificial, please ensure that your lights and extension cords are free of wear and your electrical outlets are not overloaded.

For a helpful video on how to choose and care for your real Christmas tree, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ontforest>.

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A complete copy of the poll can be supplied to accredited media upon request.



Rob Keen, CEO, Trees Ontario, and Carla Grant, Executive Director, Ontario Forestry Association, pose with Smokey the Bear in front of the Ontario-grown 45-foot white spruce, donated by Trees Ontario to the Toronto Christmas Market, at the Distillery Historic District.