

## Selecting a Christmas Tree

Christmas trees are available from a variety of sources – garden centers or nurseries, local retail lots and choose-and-cut tree farms. This fact sheet can help you select a fresh tree and explains the characteristics of different types of Christmas trees.

### Choosing a Fresh Cut Tree

**Precut Trees:** Follow these points to choose the freshest precut tree.

- Purchase the tree early so that it can go in water closer to the time when it was cut.
- Consider that locally grown trees are usually fresher than trees that have been shipped from a distance. They are also generally less expensive.
- Select a tree that is at least one foot shorter than the ceiling height in the room where you will display your tree.
- Be sure to look at the trunk. If you can see splits in the trunk, the tree most likely will have dried to a point where it will not take up water.
- Make sure the base of the trunk is straight and 6 to 8 inches long to allow placement in the tree stand.

- Look for a tree with a healthy, green appearance and few dead or browning needles. Avoid trees with a wilted look.
- Run your hand along a branch. Needles should be fresh and flexible and should not come off in your hand.
- Bump the trunk of the tree on the ground. If green needles fall off the tree, it is not fresh. You can expect a few brown needles to fall from the tree. Choose another tree if many brown needles fall off.

**Cut-Your-Own Trees:** Trees at choose-and-cut farms are usually cheaper than at retail lots, and trees that are growing in a field will be fresh and full of water. Most farms have several different species to choose from. Many also provide hand saws and will help you load your tree. Some farms will let you preselect a tree and tag it for later cutting.

A list of Christmas tree farms is available from the South Carolina Christmas Tree Association and from local Clemson Extension offices.

### Types of Cut Christmas Trees

Name	Description	Scent	Needle Retention	Availability
'Carolina Sapphire' Cypress	Dense, fine-textured steel blue foliage. Will not support heavy ornaments.	Very fragrant with lemony mint aroma.	Good needle retention; make sure that the tree has a constant water supply.	Available precut and at many tree farms.
'Clemson Greenspire' Cypress	Dense, fine-textured grass green foliage. Will not support heavy ornaments.	Very fragrant with lemony mint aroma.	Good needle retention; make sure that the tree has a constant water supply.	Available precut and at many tree farms.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scent</b>	<b>Needle Retention</b>	<b>Availability</b>
Deodar Cedar	Short bluish-green needles on strong branches that are pendulous at tips.	Distinctive and pleasant aroma.	Needle retention excellent for only two weeks.	Available in limited quantities at some choose-and-cut Christmas tree farms.
Douglas Fir	Soft dark green or blue-green needles. Light in weight, with firm branches	Sweet, citrus fragrance.	Excellent needle retention if fresh. Because they are shipped a long distance, check carefully for freshness before purchase.	Available precut at some retail lots.
Eastern Red Cedar	Dense, finely textured, dark green foliage. Foliage is sometimes prickly. Will not support heavy ornaments	Very strongly aromatic.	Dries quickly; make sure that the tree has a constant supply of water.	Traditional cut tree in the South. Commonly available at tree farms; seldom found precut.
Eastern White Pine	Usually very full and dense with long, soft blue-green needles. Branches will not support very heavy ornaments.	Pine fragrance, but less intense than other pines.	Excellent needle retention; however, trees will wilt visibly if not given adequate water	Eastern white pine is readily available from retail lots and at tree farms.
Fraser Fir	Short, firm dark green needles with white bands on the undersides. Sturdy limbs.	Exceptional and long lasting aroma	Excellent needle retention. Avoid trees with split trunks. Trees with splits will dry rapidly.	Readily available as precut trees.
Leyland Cypress	Dense, soft-textured dark green to grayish-blue foliage. Limbs will not support heavy ornaments unless heavily sheared.	Little scent.	Excellent needle retention. Uses large quantities of water. Must water several times per day to prevent drying.	Available at choose-and-cut operations. Rarely available precut.
Norway Spruce	Stiff, sharp, dark green needles on strong branches.	Light balsam-like aroma.	Needle retention is poor.	Occasionally found at retail lots.
Scotch Pine	Dark to bluish-green, fairly sharp, short needles. Stiff branches will support heavy ornaments.	Pleasant pine fragrance.	Excellent needle retention.	Scotch pines are sold on retail lots.
Virginia Pine	Dense, short-needled, artistically spiralled foliage. Strong limbs support heavy ornaments.	Pleasant pine fragrance.	Excellent needle retention.	Commonly available at both retail lots and choose-and-cut farms.

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