

# O Christmas tree!

Illinois foresters recommend making sure your Christmas tree is fresh when you buy it and doesn't become too dry after you get it home.

"Be sure to ask the Christmas tree vendor when the trees they're selling were cut so that you have a better idea of how fresh the tree really is," said Mike Mason, acting chief of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Division of Forest Resources.

"While many retail outlets take care of the trees they sell to make sure they're as fresh as possible, some simple research can help you avoid buying a tree that is just too dry to keep in your home through the holidays."

Many people like to cut their own tree.

Mason added, "Whether you buy your natural Christmas tree from a tree farm or a corner lot, make sure you take care of it when you get it home."

Here's some tips for caring for a real Christmas tree:

- Make a one-half inch to one-inch cut from the base of the tree trunk to allow the tree to absorb water more easily and not dry out.

- Place the tree in a sturdy stand that holds at least a gallon of water. Replenish the water frequently.

Healthy Christmas trees may absorb water at a rate of a quart or more each day.

- If you are decorating the tree with electric lights, make sure cords are not frayed and the lights are in proper working order. Use only UL-approved lights and unplug the lights when no one is at home and before you go to bed.

- Trees near vents or heat-producing appliances will dry out more quickly and may become a fire hazard.

- You can also leave your-discarded Christmas tree in your yard for use as a habitat for winter birds. (CNS)



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