

Choosing the perfect Christmas tree

By Linda Roe

The search for the perfect Christmas tree is a fun holiday tradition for the whole family. The search, like the “perfect tree” itself, varies greatly. Some people arrive at the tree lot and 15 minutes later are heading home with their perfect tree. Other families spend hours examining every tree on the lot, only to come back to their first choice. Whatever tree you choose, it will most likely be a Noble Fir or a Douglas Fir.

Nobles have sturdy branches that hold ornaments well. They can be sheared or left in an open shape with space between the branches. They last well through the whole season and flock well. Douglas Firs are sheared in the classic Christmas tree shape. They are cheaper to purchase, but tend to drop needles earlier. You may find a small corner of the lot with Grand Firs, usually sheared. They have large, flat needles and a nice evergreen scent. Fraser Firs, which are sometimes available, have strong, upright branches and a silvery cast to the underside of the needles.

When you have found your perfect tree, make sure it will fit in your living room, then give it a little TLC. If it has not been in water, give it a fresh cut on the bottom, stick it in a bucket of water and let it have a nice, long drink. Once inside, it is important to keep it watered. However, the tree will eventually quit taking water. Make sure all the lights are in working order. Be sure to keep your tree lights off when you are not there to enjoy them. And never put lighted candles on, or close to, your tree.

Planting a living Christmas tree in your yard is a great way to celebrate a baby’s first Christmas, the purchase of a new home, or as a memorial to a loved one. Classic cut trees are not the best choices for a living tree, however. Most yards simply are too small to accommodate a tree that will grow to be a couple hundred feet tall and many feet wide. There are lots of smaller growing trees that would make good outdoor Christmas trees. You won’t use as many decorations, but it will be easier to create a theme tree.

One of the prettiest candidates is the Korean Silver Fir. The upward-turning needles



PHOTO BY TOM ROE

show off their silvery undersides, it is slow growing and it sets cones on young trees. If you like the silvery blue needles, check out Arizona Firs. Do you want the traditional green tree? Try the Pyramidal Silver Fir, which isn’t really silver at all but a nice green with a formal pyramidal shape. These trees grow slowly to around 15 feet.

If I had a cherry picker, I would decorate the mature Serbian Spruce in my front yard. Tall and narrow at the top, the branches almost weep as it forms a wide “ballerina skirt” at the base. Even though it is large, its thin shape has kept it from being a problem. There is a slow-growing variety, called Bruns, which would make a wonderful little tree to decorate outside every year. Pine trees can be used as cut Christmas trees, but are seldom seen on lots. If you like the soft, open look of a pine, plant one as a living tree for Christmas. A Vanderwolf Limber Pine has beautiful long, blue needles that really need no other decorations other than, perhaps, a string of white lights. An artsy person might like to “branch out” and decorate a weeping tree, contorted tree or even a deciduous tree. No hemlocks, no matter how artsy, should be used as Christmas trees, as they defoliate.

Your living tree will be fine outside after Christmas until you can plant it, but keep it watered. Living trees cannot be kept in a warm house for longer than 10 days, because the tree will be fooled into thinking it’s spring, then will be shocked by the cold of winter. With care, your living Christmas tree will become a cherished part of your landscape. ■

— Information courtesy of Wight’s Home and Garden.