

Texas (and U.S.) Christmas Tree Facts

The Christmas tree tradition goes back to the 8th century when Saint Boniface traveled to northern Germany to convert the locals to Christianity. He found the people there worshipping a huge oak tree because they believed there was a god inside it. They were preparing to sacrifice their young prince to the god. Boniface stopped the sacrifice and cut down the tree. Years later, he found a beautiful evergreen growing where he had cut down the big oak. Since the tree was evergreen (“ever-living”) and it pointed toward heaven, the tree was called the Christ-tree. In the 16th century, Martin Luther brought an evergreen tree into church to celebrate Christ’s birthday. The service was called the Christ Mass, so the tree was called the Christmas tree. He was the first to put decorations on the tree in the form of candles and said that the lights represented the Star of Bethlehem.

General info

There are approximately 150 Christmas tree farms in Texas, producing 200,000 trees annually on 2,500 acres.

Texas Christmas tree growers each contribute \$12,000 yearly to the Texas economy. Christmas trees have been grown commercially in Texas since 1977.

One acre of Christmas trees provides oxygen for 18 people.

Christmas trees provide a natural habitat for birds, rabbits and other wildlife.

Note: Cut-your-own for the freshest tree.

Christmas trees can be recycled: mulch, feeding areas for fishponds, bird feeders, erosion barriers along beaches and shorelines.

Christmas trees can be grown on land where other crops cannot be successfully grown.

For every Christmas tree cut, there will be 2-3 seedlings planted.

Thirty-six (36) million people will cut a Christmas tree this year.

Prior to the 1950s, many family Christmas trees came from the forest. Today, over 90% are plantation-grown.

The first recorded record of Christmas trees dates to the 16th century Germany.

The tradition of the Christmas tree was brought to the U.S. by German settlers and Hessian soldiers paid to fight in the Revolutionary War.

In 1842, Charles Minnegrode introduced the custom of decorating trees to the U.S. in Williamsburg, Virginia.

In 1851, Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds loaded with trees from the Catskill Mountains to New York City, and opened the first retail lot in the U.S.

14th President Franklin Pierce brought the Christmas tree tradition to the White House.

In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Since 1966, the winner of the National Christmas Tree Association's "Most Perfect Christmas Tree Contest" has presented this beautiful, fresh Christmas tree to the President and First Lady. It is displayed in the Blue Room of the White House.

Types of Trees:

*Virginia Pine is the most common Christmas tree grown in Texas. Pleasant pine fragrance, dense foliage, good growth rates. Grows well in southern climates.

*Afghan Pine (Eldarica Pine) is the west Texas tree of choice, due to the alkaline soil. Similar in appearance to Virginia Pine, but with a more open branch structure.

*Leland Cypress is a cross between an Alaska-Cedar and Monterey Cypress. If kept in water, it will last longer than any other Christmas tree varieties, with very, very minimal needle drop. Leland Cypress are rapidly gaining in popularity and will most likely take over the top spot in most popular Christmas tree and bump Virginia Pine out of place.

*Eastern Red Cedar is the traditional native Christmas tree than many Southerners remember from their childhood, as they grow naturally in the South. Dense foliage, pleasant green color and natural Christmas tree shape. Drawbacks are sticky needles and short house life.

*Carolina Sapphire is a cultivar of Arizona Cypress and is beginning to be planted in a limited basis in Texas. This tree has fast growth, beautiful blue color and an excellent aroma. Originally found in South Carolina, this is a beautiful tree.

Growing time

4-8 years for a tree to grow 6'-8'. Trees on drip irrigation will grow faster. Since newly planted will take 4-8 years to grow, every year growers should plant another crop over the next 4-5 years.

Equipment needed

Mower, backpack sprayer, pruners, a dibble bar, a shearing knife, pine tip moth monitors, protective gear, chain saw (for heavy trimming) and Tylenol.

Time involved in growing

Major maintenance activities are weed control, insect control and tree shaping. Growers planting 500-2,000 trees per year may maintain the farm in their spare time. Full-time growers may plant 5,000-10,000 trees annually.

Initial investment

If you already have land, the initial cost is low. Tree seedlings can be purchased from \$50-\$100 for 500 trees. They are available through the Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association. Orders are placed in October and plants are picked up in January or February.

To Do list

- *Get your soil tested to determine what species you can grow.
- *Plan your field layout, providing enough plots for future years.
- *Consider your rainfall. Do you need drip irrigation?

Information gathered from :
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