



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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GET LOCAL, GET "REAL" GREEN AT AREA CHRISTMAS TREE FARMS

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture is encouraging Tennesseans to purchase "real" Christmas trees this holiday season. Christmas trees are a renewable and recyclable resource that contains no petroleum products and leaves a very small carbon footprint. Buying a natural tree this year from a nearby farm is a great holiday gift to the environment and to local farmers.

"Lots of people don't think about where plastics – and therefore artificial trees-- come from," said Tennessee Department of Agriculture horticulture marketing specialist Rob Beets. "Plastic is made with petroleum products. Lead – an ingredient in PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastic, and other metals, are also important parts of an artificial tree. Fake trees don't biodegrade, and chances are they've traveled a long way, leaving a huge carbon footprint to get to the store or your home. About 85 percent of them start in China, but they'll end up sitting in our American landfills for centuries."

In contrast, natural Christmas trees are completely recyclable and are close to home, waiting to be transported from the farm to your living room. In the field, Christmas trees absorb carbon dioxide and other gases, emit fresh oxygen and are often grown on soil that doesn't support other crops. Additionally, their root systems serve to stabilize soil, protect area water quality and provide refuge for wildlife. Grown on farms just like any other crop, one to three new seedlings are planted for every tree harvested to ensure a constant supply.

If you choose a cut tree, after the holidays you can take it to a local site to be turned into mulch for area trails. Some people also like to place their old trees in their ponds or favorite fishing spots to serve as fish habitats. No matter what you do with it, it is 100 percent biodegradable.

There's also the option to buy a balled and burlapped live tree to replant once the holidays are over. The grower at the farm will be happy to give you tips on how to plant and care for your transplanted tree. Buying a live tree from a farm close to you is a guarantee that the variety you choose will grow well in your area, an assurance you can't always get other places.

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"When you visit a Tennessee Christmas tree farm, you don't just do the planet a favor — you give yourself a treat, too," says Beets. "Local tree growers depend on loyal customers, so they make sure you come back year after year for a great holiday experience. Tennessee has Christmas tree farms located from one end of the state to the other."

You can find the farm closest to you by visiting the Web site www.picktnproducts.org and clicking on the Christmas tree photo for a statewide directory. It is best to call ahead and confirm hours of operation and activities before heading out to a farm.

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