

# O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum

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Trees are wrapped in wire for transit, then added to stands at the lots.

Yet, the love of winter evergreens was celebrated long before the arrival of Christianity. In ancient Egypt, the sun god Ra was honored on the longest night of the year, Dec. 21, and the shortest day, Dec. 22 with palm frond decorations to symbolize life over death. The Romans marked the solstice with evergreen boughs in anticipation of a prosperous spring. The Druids used greens as symbols of eternal life while the Vikings believed that evergreens were the chosen trees of their sun god, Balder.

With the advent of electricity, Thomas Edison presented the possibility of twinkling tree lights without as much fire danger from branch-tied candles. Europeans preferred small trees of 4 feet; Americans sought plants that would reach the ceiling. Decorations in

the early days included strands of nuts, berries, apples, and popcorn. Today, a fortune can be spent on accessories and unique ornaments fit for a king from hand-carved Nativity scenes to hand-blown glass angels.

When to buy, cut, and trim the tree varies from country to country. Many American families get into the December spirit immediately following Thanksgiving while many Europeans wait until Christmas Eve to launch their rituals. Evergreen garlands, boughs, ivy, mistletoe, wreaths, poinsettias, and holly join the enticing kitchen aromas of gingerbread, marzipan, and hot mulled wine, making our Christmas castles merry and bright.

Grown in all 50 states, Christmas tree farming is big business, although it is mostly small farmers who do the growing, planting as many as 2,000 trees per acre. Seventy-seven million trees are planted annually as American consumers purchase approximately 30 million farm grown trees valued at more than \$1 billion. Fresh trees (to me the only way to play) outsell artificial trees three to one. Young families who are starting their own traditions often prefer to “cut their own” at a Christmas tree farm, enjoying a day in search of the perfect tannenbaum, as our family did in years past.

As you banish the blues with the greens of a pine, fur, spruce, redwood, cedar, or cypress, you'll be rewarded with the fresh fragrance of the wild woods. Remember to keep your cut tree watered as most farmed trees are chopped down in October or early November, then trucked to the retailer. While they won't dry out outdoors, once indoors, your specimen will need a quart to a gallon of water per day depending on the size.

This year, whether your tree was grown on a plantation or in your backyard, bring the botanical brilliance of a live tree into your seasonal festivities and celebrate the magic.

*O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,  
Your branches green delight us!*

Wishing you seasonal sparkle; glow forth and enjoy being home for the holidays.



A bright red poinsettia will always signal the holidays.



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## WINTER TIPS

Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been “topped”.

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