

## **CHRISTMAS TREE SELECTION**

**By: Steve McShane**

The first fresh cut Christmas tree lot opened on the streets of New York City in 1851. Since that time, the number of Christmas trees sold on an annual basis has topped more than 30 million.

The most common way to select the family tree is by visiting a Christmas Tree Lot found at a shopping center or local nursery. Lots offer convenience, service and a wide variety of tree species. Many will deliver and set up your tree for you.

The best trees in the Salinas Valley come from the Pacific Northwest. The region best known for consistent quality is Western and Southwestern Washington. Parts of Western Washington can average more than 60 inches of rainfall a year! All trees on retail lots should be checked carefully, regardless of origin.

You'll find that there are a great many of species of trees available throughout the Monterey Bay Area. The most popular are the Noble and Douglas fir. Firs generally hold up longer given our "Western" climate.

My pick for best performance at the home or office is the Noble Fir. Noble Firs are one of the best species in terms of needle retention and fragrance. Another tree that is growing fast in local popularity is the Nordman Fir. This tree exceeds the quality of any tree on the market. The only challenge is that they are subject to limited availability.

Once you have selected your Christmas Tree, its continued freshness depends upon the type of care you provide. The tree should have a fresh cut across the bottom, about 1 inch above the old base. This removes any dead wood that may not readily absorb water. Next, the tree should be placed in a stand with a large reservoir of water.

Depending upon the size, species, and location of the tree, it may absorb a gallon of water in the first day, so it should be checked frequently and re-watered as necessary. You may want to consider a tree preserve as well. Tree preserve contains essential minerals and nutrients to keep the tree fresh and prolong needle retention. They can often be found at the place of purchase.

Always locate your Christmas tree in a safe place, preferably near a wall or corner where it is not likely to be knocked over. Keep the tree away from heat sources such as hot air ducts, wood stoves and fireplaces. In addition, be sure that any electrical cords used in decorating the tree are in good working condition. Lights should always be turned off at night and / or when leaving for an extended period of time.

A fresh Christmas tree in the home or office is the icing on the cake when it comes to the holidays. Here along the Central Coast we have dozens of qualified outlets to pick out the ideal tree. Make your selection carefully and with distinction. It is worth it.