

A HOME & GARDEN

Home Guide

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Preserving Christmas trees key

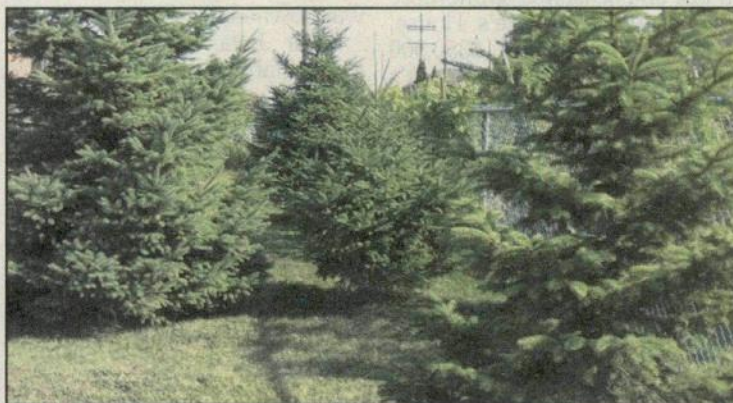
By Maggie L. Moor-Orth
Delaware Cooperative
Extension System

During this wonderful time of the year, many doors, window and mailboxes are decorated with boughs of pine and holly and red ribbon bows. Red, blue, yellow, orange and white lights are greeting visitors in business windows and framing homes in many neighborhoods all over Kent County. These same colorful decorations also adorn Christmas trees throughout this holiday season.

When selecting a cut Christmas tree to decorate in your home, freshness is the most important factor to consider. If you go to a Delaware Christmas tree farm and watch the tree as it is cut or cut it yourself, then you know it is fresh.

But, if you go to a roadside Christmas tree lot, you cannot be sure how old it is. Here are some helpful hints to determine a tree's freshness and to maintain its appeal once it is in your home:

- Pull some of the needles on the branch — if they stay on, the tree is most probably freshly cut.
- Another test for freshness is



Submitted photo

Those who go to a Delaware Christmas tree farm and watch the tree as it is cut or cut it themselves know it is fresh.

Garden Tales

to bend a few needles between your thumb and forefinger — they should spring back and not break.

- Once at home, keep the freshly cut tree in an unheated, protected location such as a garage or on a patio until you are ready to decorate it.

- Before placing it in water, make a fresh cut near the end of the trunk or cut about an inch off the bottom of the tree to expose

new fresh cells for sufficient water absorption.

- Once inside, keep at least a couple inches of water around the tree trunk until it is taken down after Christmas.

These ideas should help preserve your Christmas tree throughout the holidays.

Editor's note: Maggie Moor-Orth is the home horticulture agent for Delaware State University's Cooperative Extension. For more information on this or other horticulture topics, contact her at (302) 857-6424.