

AGRICULTURE NEWS

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COMMISSIONERS WELCOME DONATED CHRISTMAS TREES TO THE CAPITOL

THEY ENCOURAGE ALL NEW YORKERS TO BUY A NEW YORK GROWN CHRISTMAS TREE

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Darrel J. Aubertine and Office of General Services Commissioner RoAnn Destito today welcomed several New York State Christmas tree growers to the Capitol where they donated trees and wreaths to decorate the Capitol and Executive Mansion for the holiday season. The trees will be displayed in the Governor's Reception Room on the second floor of the Capitol and in the public space on the first floor of the Executive Mansion where they will be enjoyed by those touring the historic home. The wreaths will be displayed on the doors of the Executive Mansion and at the Governor's offices in Albany and New York City. The New York State products were donated by farmers from Pleasant Valley, Johnstown, and Marion.

"The holidays are time for family and tradition. Families gathering for the holidays should enjoy the presence of a fresh, natural New York Christmas tree in their home," said Commissioner Aubertine. "Christmas tree growing is a very important part of New York's agriculture economy. It creates jobs and economic activity in many of our agricultural communities. I encourage all New Yorkers to buy a real New York tree this holiday season. It's easy for New Yorkers to buy local or even to enjoy a cut-your-own family day in the country with information about tree farms on the State's website: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov> "

"Governor Cuomo has made it clear that agriculture is one of New York's important economic drivers and the Christmas tree industry not only exemplifies the diversity of New York agriculture but the indirect benefits it provides such as tourism and rural outdoor activities," Office of General Services Commissioner, RoAnn Destito, said. "These beautiful trees and wreaths are representative of the expertise of New York State farmers, and I am honored that we are able to showcase them in this historic building as we continue our work to make the Capitol more accessible to all our citizens."

Robert Brown, Executive Director of the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York and tree farmer from Norfolk, said, "The Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York is very honored to present real New York Christmas trees to Governor Cuomo, which were sourced locally by Bilmar Nursery in Pleasant Valley from Franke's Nursery in Marion and wreaths from Goderie's Tree Farm in Johnstown. Our association has approximately 400 members that are proud to be part of New York's real green industry. Christmas trees are truly a renewable resource that keeps giving long after the holiday season."

The Turkish Firs were graciously donated to New York State by W. Brant Rawls. Mr. Rawls, who operates Bilmar Nurseries in Pleasant Valley (Dutchess County), was named the 2011 New York State Grand Champion by the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York at the State Fair in Syracuse. Mr. Rawls earned the honor of donating the trees by being named State Grand Champion. He said he chose the 20 year-old, 13-foot being displayed in the Capitol and the 17 year-old, 11-foot tree in the Executive Mansion as the perfect fit for these historic buildings. The trees were grown by Doug and Kendra Franke, owners of Franke's Nursery in the Town of Marion (Wayne County).

The wreaths were graciously donated to New York State by Peter Goderie, owner of Goderie's Tree Farm in Johnstown (Fulton County).

New York Christmas tree farms offer a wide variety of real Christmas trees. Fraser Firs and Balsam Firs are the most popular varieties in New York State, while White and Blue Spruce, Scotch Pine, and other firs, such as Canaan, Douglas, Concolour, and others are available as well. Many local Christmas tree farms also offer fresh roping, swags and wreaths along with handmade crafts for Christmas.

Locally grown and harvested trees, when watered properly, can remain fresh in your home well past New Year's Day. To be sure that your Christmas tree was grown in New York, consumers can look for the 'Pride of New York' emblem. The Pride of New York emblem signifies products that are grown or made in New York State. Follow these guidelines to keep your real Christmas tree fresh throughout the holiday season:

1. After you bring the tree home, cut one-quarter inch off the base of the trunk. Keep the tree outdoors in a container of water and protect it from the wind and sun until you're ready to decorate. This helps the tree retain moisture.
2. Before you bring the tree into your home, make another fresh cut a minimum of one-quarter inch off the base of the trunk. This reopens the tree stem so it can take water immediately. Place it in a stand with fresh water. Do not allow the water level to drop below the fresh cut or the stem will reseal.
3. Trees may drink from 2 pints to 1 gallon of water a day. Use a stand with 1-gallon capacity or more. Keep your tree away from drying heat sources such as sunny windows, hot air ducts and fireplaces. Check the water level daily and supply fresh water as needed.

Christmas trees provide numerous environmental and economic benefits. Christmas tree farms use land that might otherwise be developed as its soil is not often suited for typical agricultural crops. They help stabilize soil and protect local water supplies. They also absorb carbon dioxide and other gases. One acre of Christmas trees emits enough oxygen for 18 people.

Economically, Christmas trees provide an additional income for farmers and rural landowners. They also create seasonal jobs and serve as an economic stimulus for local communities, offering not only trees, but wreaths and a tourism opportunity.

Christmas trees also help prevent the introduction of invasive plant pests. New York trees take 7 to 10 years to grow and must be maintained in excellent health because they must be

aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Trees grown under such conditions are naturally resistant to insects and diseases. By purchasing a locally grown Christmas tree, there is little chance of introducing new pests to the area or spreading pests from one area to another.

Christmas trees are also considered a renewable resource, as they are typically chipped and recycled as mulch after the season. They may also be placed outside following the holiday season and used as shelter for small birds and mammals, and later chipped and recycled in the spring.

According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, New York ranks seventh nationally for Christmas tree production with approximately 1,000 Christmas tree growers, utilizing more than 20,000 acres across the State and harvesting nearly 350,000 trees annually.

To find a Christmas tree farm in your area, visit the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets website at: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov> or the Pride of New York website at http://www.prideofny.com/member_search.asp. On both of these websites, you'll be able to search a region or county for all the local Christmas tree farms in your area.

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