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Out on a Limb: Tree Care Tips for the Tampa Bay Region

Quote “It's not the Christmas tree or what's under that matters, it's who's around it”.

A Christmas tree, live or artificial, is almost a given in most households in our country. But, it was not always so.

The tradition of using evergreens and trees in celebration likely began in the northern parts of Europe. Early cultures saw the ‘ever green’ plants as a promise that the Sun would halt its wintry decline into darkness and return to herald Spring. Evergreen plants were part of the annual pagan celebration of renewal.

To the earliest American Puritan communities, Christmas was sacred. The Plymouth Colony governor tried to halt the use of evergreens and decorations. He considered them a “pagan mockery” of the holiday observance. The outspoken Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell preached against “the heathen traditions” of singing carols and the use of decorated trees. He feared they might distract Christians from “that sacred event.” In 1659 the General Court of Massachusetts declared that any form of celebration on Christmas, other than a church service, was a penal offense. People could be cited for hanging decorations of any kind. By the first half of the 19th-century it was still usual to find a Christmas tree in any American town square or home. This began to change with the influx of German immigrants who brought their own traditions to the new country.

The first record of a Christmas tree being displayed in an American home was in the 1830's by German settlers. The trees had been a tradition in German homes since the 16th century.

Outdoor, community Christmas trees are recorded in use in Pennsylvania by the mid-18th century. In 1846 German Prince Albert and his wife the English Queen Victoria of England publicly embraced the Christmas tree. Their popularity led to the tradition becoming established in England and the United States.



In the late 19th and early 20th century most Americans decorated their trees with homemade ornaments. Some of these early traditions have seen a revival in recent times. Today, garlands of popcorn dyed bright colors and interlaced with berries and nuts are popular. In the late 19th century Thomas Edison's business partner [Edward Hibbard developed and displayed the first tree lit by electric lights](#). The modern version of the Christmas tree was complete. Having a brightly lit Christmas tree in our home became an American tradition.

For further information see: <https://www.britannica.com/plant/Christmas-tree>

How to Dispose of Your Christmas Tree

Whether you take down your tree before the New Year, or like to enjoy it as long as you can, ensuring safe and appropriate disposal is important.

Dispose of your tree as soon as it shows signs of drying out, because that's when it becomes a fire hazard. Needles will become brittle and start to fall off, and the tree will no longer take up water. (The Morton Arboretum)

For information in your area on how to dispose/recycle your Christmas tree follow one of these web site links, or contact your local government's sanitation department.

[Hillsborough County solid waste customers](#)

[City of Tampa](#)

[Pasco County](#)

[Pinellas County](#)

[Polk County](#)

Please send in your questions and I will answer them via email or in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

Send your favorite tree picture and I will try to use it in the newsletter.

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Hillsborough
County Florida



Florida Christmas Tree Farm