



December 2017

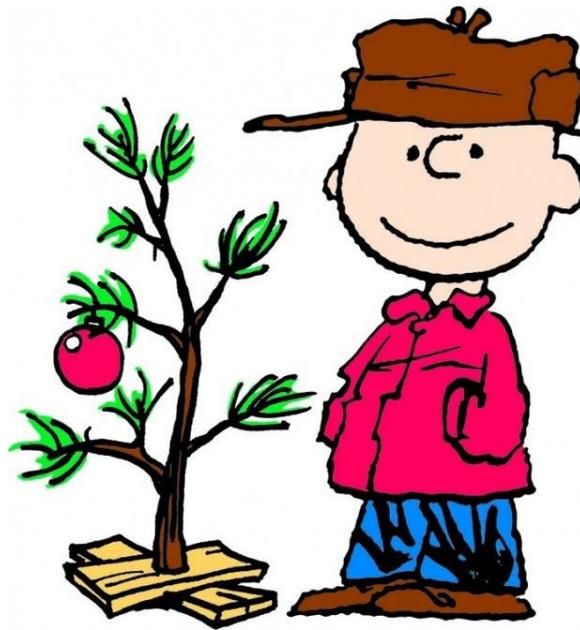
A Tree for the Holidays

For those whose holiday celebration includes a Christmas tree then this is for you. The first decision to make is do you want a real tree or an artificial tree. Let's take a look at some of the facts. Artificial trees look good and can be reused for multiple years. As the name implies, most artificial trees are made from man made materials such as metal and petroleum based plastic and are non-recyclable. Additionally, 80-90% are imported (mostly from China). While they can be reused for multiple years, they will spend the rest of eternity in a landfill when they are discarded – they are not biodegradable and last indefinitely.

Real trees, on the other hand, are part of an agricultural industry that provides employment for over 100,000 people. There are over 350 million Christmas trees currently planted in the U.S. Each year about 30 million are cut, sold, and replanted annually. When Christmas is over, real trees can be composted, turned into mulch, or used to rebuild Louisiana's marsh and wetland coast. Click on the following link for more information about Christmas trees and costal restoration: <http://www.jeffparish.net/index.aspx?page=321>. And that's the cut trees.

Another possible choice are balled-and-burlapped or containerized live trees. Though they require a lot more work to move around and require a

large pot while on display in the home, they can be planted in your landscape or donated for planting elsewhere after the holidays. Then they spend the next 50 years or more stabilizing the soil, providing food and shelter for wildlife, and become part of a green oxygen-providing landscape.



According to 2014 statistics, there are around 40 Christmas tree farms in Louisiana (over half are choose and cut farms (<http://www.lams-christmas-trees.org/la.html>) with a gross value of about \$900K. With Louisiana-grown Christmas trees you can choose Leighton Green Leyland Cypress, Castlewellan Gold Leyland Cypress, Naylor's Blue Leyland Cypress, Murray Ovensii Leyland Cypress, Notabilis Ley-

land Cypress, Blue Ice Arizona Cypress, Carolina Sapphire Arizona Cypress, Berki Red Cedar, Eastern Red Cedar and Virginia Pine. In addition to these, most farms also have fresh cut North Carolina grown Fraser fir.

Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) is used to describe a group of trees where all the members are sterile hybrids. There are no naturally occurring Leyland cypress. They must be propagated by rooted cuttings. This tree is a hybrid of Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and Alaskan cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*). In 1888, six seedlings were discovered by C.J. Leyland at (Continued)

December Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Beets	Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace F1, Ruby Queen	¼ inch	2-4	55-60
Brussels Sprouts	Jade Cross E, Long Island Improved	⅝ inch	12-15	90*
Cabbage	Blue Vantage, Platinum Dynasty, Stonehead, Cheers, Blue Dynasty, Emblem, Rio Verde	⅝ inch	12-15	65-75*
Carrots	Danvers 128, Purple Haze, Thumbelina, Apache, Enterprise, Maverick, Sugar Snax 54	⅝ inch	1-2	70-75
Celery	None Given	⅝ inch	6-8	210
Chinese Cabbage	None Given	¼ inch	12	60-80*
Collards	Champions, Flash, Georgia Southern, Top Bunch, Vates	⅝ inch	6-12	75
Garlic	Creole: Early, Louisiana, White Mexican; Italian: Early Red, Lorz; Large: Elephant (Tahitian)	1 inch	4-6	210
Kale	None Given	½ inch	12-18	50
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner	⅝ inch	6	55-75
Leeks	Alora	⅝ inch	2-4	135-210
Lettuce	Esmeralda, New Red Fire F1, Nevada, Tall Guzmaine Elite	⅝ inch	4-12	45-80
Mustard Greens	Florida Broadleaf, Greenwave, Red Giant, Southern Giant Curled, Savannah, Tendergreen	⅝ inch	4-6	35-50
Onions	Red: Red Creole, Southern Belle; White: Candy, Savannah Sweet; Vidalia: Candy Ann, Caramelo, Century, Georgia Boy, Mata Hari	½ inch	4-6	85
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross	⅝ inch	1	22-28
Shallots	Matador, Prism	1 inch	4-8	50
Spinach	Bloomsdale Long Standing, Melody, Tye, Unipak 151	⅝ inch	3-6	35-45
Swiss Chard	None Given	¼ inch	6-8	45-55
Turnips	Alamo, All Top, Purple, Top White Globe, Seven Top, Southern Green, Top Star, Tokyo Cross	⅝ inch	2-6	40-50

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Leighton Hall in the South of Wales. The two parent trees were growing on the Estate and cross bred purely by accident. The foliage of the Leyland cypress varies somewhat from one cultivar to the next. But in general,

it tends to be arranged in irregularly flat planes with a dark green to gray color. The shoots branch repeatedly and have a contrasting mahogany color except at the tips. The trees have little aroma. The different cultivars may show tendencies to bluish green as well. Leyland cypress is the most popular Christmas tree in the Southeast.

The Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*) is a steeple shaped tree with a pale-green to gray-green color. The leaves are extremely tiny and quite plentiful. They lay close to the branchlet surface in a scale like arrangement and are about 0.1 inches long. Arizona cypress is most commonly propagated by seed germination, but the aforementioned cultivars are propagated by rooted cutting. The Arizona cypress has a pleasing aroma.

The branches of the eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) are compact and form a pyramidal crown, except in older trees. The leaves are usually arranged in opposing pairs along the branchlets. They are a dark shiny green color. The bark is reddish brown with a tendency to peel in long fibrous strips. Eastern redcedar are propagated by seed germination. But the aforementioned cultivars are propagated by rooted cutting. Eastern red cedar has a very pleasing aroma and is a natural moth repellent.

Virginia pines (*Pinus virginiana*) continue to be the most popular Christmas tree in the South. The Virginia pine's needles occur in pairs. They are twisted and range from 1.5 to 3" in length. The branches are stout and woody. Virginia pine is almost exclusively propagated through seed germination.

Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) branches turn slightly upward. They have good form and needle-retention. They are dark blue-green in color and have a pleasant scent. Fraser firs were named for John Fraser (1750-1811), a Scot botanist who explored the southern Appalachian Mountains in the late 18th century. The combination of form, needle retention, dark blue-green color, pleasant scent and excellent shipping characteristics has led to Fraser fir being the most popular Christmas tree species. North Carolina produces the majority of Fraser fir Christmas trees. It requires from 7 to 10 years in the field to produce a 6-7 feet tree.

At most of the choose and cut tree farms, they usually have a lot more going than just growing and cutting trees. Many have (Continued)



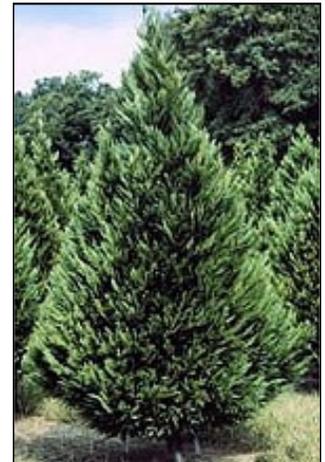
Eastern Red Cedar



Virginia Pine



Arizona Cypress
Carolina Sapphire



Leyland Cypress
Leighton Green



Arizona Cypress
Blue Ice



Fraser Fir

A Tree for the Holidays

activities for the whole family to enjoy to make selecting your tree a fun-filled experience in itself. They also have other festive decorations and greenery available.



Photo from Grant Farms—Grant, Louisiana - www.grantchristmastreefarm.com

Needle length, color, fragrance, density, branch strength and size (know the measurements of the area your Christmas tree will occupy) are all things you want to consider when choosing your tree. For example, if you use lots of ornaments that are weighty, you'll want to choose a tree with thick stout branches, if you like more depth in your ornament arrangement a more airy tree would be better so ornaments located in the interior of the tree are readily visible. At the tree farms, you can choose and tag

your tree in advance then cut it later when you are ready to take it home. Always choose a tree that looks healthy and is not losing its needles. After you have chosen your tree, whether from a choose and cut farm or a pre-cut tree lot, here is some good general information to keep in mind. 1) Use a tree stand with enough water capacity to provide 1 quart of water for each 1 inch of trunk diameter. 2) Cut a ½" inch disc off the base of your tree before placing it in the stand. This fresh cut will ensure that the trees water uptake "pipes" are open. 3) Do Not shave the bark from the sides of the trunk to make it fit the stand – get a larger stand or smaller tree. 4) Check the water daily. A steady water supply is the best way to keep your tree fresh. Research has shown that pure water is all that's needed, use of "stay fresh" additives or aspirin (or whatever else you've heard) really doesn't aid in keeping your tree fresh. But if it makes you feel better, most don't harm the tree either. 5) Be aware that you are bringing a tree that's been growing outside for years into a warm house. You may see a few insects here and there wake up and start to move around. Don't be alarmed. 6) Do not locate your tree near a heat source. While a fresh green tree **is not** a fire hazard, dry brittle trees are. Do all that you can to keep your tree from drying out. If it does become dry and brittle, remove it. Christmas trees do not spontaneously combust. In 1998 more than 32 million Real Christmas Trees were used in the U.S. Of those, only 0.00093% were ignited in home fires. Overloaded electric outlets and faulty wires are the most common causes of holiday fires in residences - these types of fires can be just as dangerous with an artificial tree.

Did you know: 1) real Christmas trees are grown in all 50 states, 2) real trees are a renewable, recyclable resource, and there are more than 4,000 local Christmas Tree recycling programs throughout the United States, 3) it can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of typical height (6 - 7 feet) or as little as 4 years, but the average growing time is 7 years, 4) President Franklin Pierce is credited with bringing the first Christmas tree to the White House, 5) the first Christmas tree farm was started in 1901 in New Jersey by W.V. McGalliard, 6) while they're growing, real Christmas trees support life by absorbing carbon dioxide and other gases and emitting fresh oxygen, 7) growing Christmas trees stabilize soil, protect water supplies

(Continued)

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and provide refuge for wildlife while creating scenic green belts, 8) often, Christmas trees are grown on soil that doesn't support other crops. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry lists 20 Louisiana Choose and Cut Christmas tree farms in Louisiana. Check out the following link to find one near you: <http://www.ldaf.state.la.us/news/louisiana-choose-and-cut-christmas-tree-farms-2/>.

It would be remiss if we didn't also point out that for many people with allergies, real Christmas trees can be a real pain. A 2011 study performed by staff at the SUNY Upstate Medical University and published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* found that a small sample of Christmas trees carried about 50 types of mold, two-thirds of which could cause hay fever-like symptoms. The mold occurs on the trees naturally and thrives in the warm conditions of a well-heated home at Christmas. The team also reported another study which found that after a Christmas tree has been on display for two weeks, the number of airborne mold spores increases from 800 per 35 cubic feet to 5,000. Some say that hosing off your tree and allowing it to dry before bringing it in will remove a lot of the spores – no research yet to back that up. It is also true that improperly stored artificial trees are also a source of allergens – the dust, spores and detritus they collect while waiting to be erected.

While I love real Christmas trees and the agriculture they support, its great to know that we all are at liberty to choose what best fits our life. Whatever you choose make sure that you follow instructions on watering and lighting to a ensure a safe and Merry Christmas. ~Dr. Joe Willis

12 Days of Holiday Safety

It's easy to make safety a part of your holiday with these tips. Tackle one a day and you're well on your way to a safe New Year!

ESFi
Electrical Safety Foundation International



Day 1

What's that noise?

Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they hear them.

Day 5

Ouch! Prevent trips and falls by keeping cords safely along walls and out of doorways and high traffic areas.

Day 9

Nice and warm. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn—decorations, trees, gifts, and curtains.

Day 2

What a shocker!

Before use, inspect all electrical lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage.

Day 6

Kids eat the darndest things! Avoid putting lights, metal hooks, breakable ornaments, and other small decorations within reach of young children.

Day 10

Can't touch this! Consider installing tamper-resistant outlets/receptacles to prevent kids from inserting objects into the slots.

Day 3

Two's company, three's a crowd. Do not overload outlets with too many decorations or devices.

Day 7

Thirsty? Keep your Christmas tree stand full of water. A fresh, green tree poses less of a fire hazard than a dry tree.

Day 11

Escape Route: Share your family fire escape plan with overnight guests.

Day 4

Is it working? Test your ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) to make sure they're protecting you.

Day 8

Make a wish! Blow out the candles before leaving a room or going to bed.

Day 12

Hot stuff! Keep children away from cooking areas; use back burners and turn pot handles in away from little hands.

There's no greater gift you can give your family than a safe and happy holiday! Learn more at holidaysafety.org.

Algal Leaf Spot on Leathery Leaves

As far as parasites of plants go, an algal pest is pretty unusual. Usually algae are found in water, dirty aquariums, and moist environments. Only one species, *Cephaleuros virescens*, can be found in North America, ranging from Texas to North Carolina and into Florida. In Louisiana, this algae can be found on the leaves of plants that have a leathery texture. Camellias, magnolias, holly, indian hawthorn, and avocado. Luckily, in our area this algae does little harm other than making unsightly spots on the leaves of these plants.

Algal leaf spot typically occurs on the leaves of the plant, but occasionally can target the branches and twigs of woody plants as well. Leaf spots can be circular or blotchy, with feathered or rounded edges. The spots are slightly raised from the leaf surface in most cases. Color can range from green to grey, to greenish brown. When the algae is reproducing, the spots can take on a slightly red brown appearance as they begin to produce the fruiting bodies. This can also make the spots appear to be velvety.

Most of the time the algal spots on healthy plants manifest as largely cosmetic damage. If the algae is able to enter the plant via a wound, then more significant damage can take place. If plants are

stressed or in poor health, algal leaf spot can cause the leaves to yellow and drop. When the twigs or branches become infected, the pathogen can enter the tissue and girdle the area, usually killing that section of the plant.



Algae leaf spot on top of leaf.



Algae leaf spot on bottom of leaf.

Generally, most algal colonies will dry out and fall off the leaves, but you can treat them with a copper-based fungicide every two weeks until the colonies dry up and die. Removing infected leaves and raking up plant debris underneath the area also helps to control this problem. Your plants may need a pruning to help facilitate good air flow. If plants are visibly stressed, try to adjust the conditions causing the issue. Strong plants are resilient and can easily survive algal leaf spot and other issues.

Algal leaf spots can indicate excess moisture, if you are using overhead irrigation this may be a signal that you need to either turn it down or redirect the spray. Southeast Louisiana has a large range of pathogens floating

around and overhead irrigation usually rolls out a red carpet for them when it comes to your landscape's health. With some easy management, algal leaf spot can be kept at bay and your woody plants will continue to provide beauty in the landscape.

~Anna Timmerman

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'Let it Rain'

Living with Water in our Louisiana Landscapes

Presented by Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans and LSU AgCenter

Winter Gardening Symposium

Saturday, January 20, 2018

8:00 A.M. to Noon

New Orleans Museum of Art Auditorium, City Park

Join our outstanding speakers and specialists in their fields, **Dana Brown** and **Dan Johnson**, as they discuss managing stormwater in your home garden. A forum of local experts, including Urban Conservancy, SOUL and Water Wise, will then present their options to maximize your landscape potential while using our bountiful rainfall.

Using Plants for Stormwater Management. Sharing wonderful pictures from her book by the same title, Dana Brown will give a brief overview of water flow in the Southeast and which plants are well suited to meeting our water challenges. Learn about flowers, grasses, and trees which are native to our greater New Orleans area and beyond.

Using Green Infrastructure at Home. Discover ways to manage the rain that falls on your property. Learn from Dan Johnson (a.k.a. Greenman Dan) how simple changes to your yard can significantly help lessen the costly damage created by stormwater runoff such as poor water quality, urban flooding, subsidence and the rising costs to maintain New Orleans' pumping stations and drainage system.

Forum: Local Water. Dana and Dan join leaders from three local groups to educate us on what is being done with stormwater management in the greater New Orleans area and how you can help. There will be plenty of opportunities to ask questions of our forum panel on anything from city projects to your own backyard.

Your morning of learning will include a continental breakfast from Café NOMA, complimentary admission to NOMA immediately following the program and an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Besthoff Sculpture Garden adjoining the museum.

In addition, symposium attendees will receive a **discount coupon to the Pelican Greenhouse Plant Sale** which follows immediately after the program. Shop an amazing selection of native plants including a wide selection of shrubs and trees.

Registration fee is \$35.00. Please go to mggno.org/symposium for complete details and to register securely online through our Eventbrite site. **Registration opens October 18, 2017.**

Have a question? Call **504-452-9262** or email symposium@mggno.org. Follow us on **Facebook.com/MasterGardenersOfGreaterNewOrleans** for updates and the latest news about our 2018 Winter Gardening Symposium.



For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our Web site: www.lsuagcenter.com

Makes a great stocking stuffer for the gardener in your life.

[Click Here to Register](#)

December Checklist/Garden Tips

For the freshest possible Christmas tree, why not cut your own? There are many choose and cut Christmas tree farms in Louisiana. Some farms offer wagon rides, accessories and decorations. It can be a great family outing. To locate Christmas tree farms near you, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry has them listed by parish at: <http://www.ldafr.state.la.us/news/louisiana-choose-and-cut-christmas-tree-farms/>

Many garden chemicals are water based and can be destroyed by freezing. The loss of chemicals can be expensive and spilled chemicals can create dangerous conditions. Keep chemicals in a location that doesn't freeze, and if there are children in the house, they should be stored in a locked location.

Varieties of certain shrubs such as azaleas, nandinas and junipers will develop a purplish or burgundy tint to their foliage during cold weather. This is natural and no cause for worry. They will turn green again in the spring.

Prune off any freeze damage caused to gingers, philodendrons, cannas and other herbaceous tropicals by freezes. Place a four to six inch layer of mulch, such as pine straw, around the base of the plants to protect the roots and rhizomes.

Keep the water reservoir in your Christmas tree stand filled with water at all times. Check it daily.

Where you display your poinsettia depends on your overall decoration plans, but, if you can locate your plants near a window it will lengthen their attractive life. Feel the soil in the pot with your finger every day, and when it begins to feel dry water generously. Water your plant at a sink and let it drain there before putting it back out on display.

If you harvested any seeds from your garden to plant next year, or have some packets of seeds left over, place them in a plastic or glass container with a tight fitting lid and store them in your refrigerator to keep them viable. Make sure you label the seeds with the type and when they were harvested or purchased. Try to use seed within a year of harvesting or purchasing them.

Don't forget to add nature's generous bounty of leaves provided this time of year to your compost piles, or use them to mulch shrub and flower beds. Stock pile pine straw in plastic bags to use to cover low growing plants for freeze protection.

Late December through early January is the time to plant those tulip and hyacinth bulbs that have been chilling in your refrigerator (won't it be good to get the room back). It is easy to force some of the hyacinth bulbs for bloom indoors. Place the bulbs half deep in a bowl of pebbles. Add enough water to touch the bottom of the bulbs and maintain it at that level. Place in a sunny window in a cool room. The wonderfully fragrant flower spikes should appear in four to six weeks.

After your holiday cactus plant finishes blooming don't forget to move it to a sunny window for the rest of the winter. Allow the soil to become dry before watering. Constantly wet soil promotes root rot.

Harvest broccoli when the largest buds in the head are the size of the head of a kitchen match. Do not focus on the size of the head itself, as that is not an indication of when the broccoli is ready to harvest. If you begin to see yellow flowers you waited too long. Also, harvest mature broccoli heads if temperatures in the mid twenties are predicted. The plants are hardy, but the heads can be damaged by subfreezing temperatures.

Whenever practical, continue to deadhead cool season annuals such as pansies, snapdragons and dianthus to keep them blooming through the spring.

When planting fruit trees this winter and early spring, you must choose cultivars adapted to our mild winter climate. Contact your local LSU Ag Center Extension office for a free copy of our *Louisiana Home Orchard* publication.

As we move into the coldest part of the winter, don't forget to keep materials handy to cover tender plants in the landscape during freezes.

December Checklist/Garden Tips

Move tender container plants indoors on nights when temperatures are predicted to be in the low thirties or lower to prevent damage. Leave them inside in sunny windows or place them back outside when the freeze is over.

Although cold, dry winds can dry out leaf tissues and cause brown edges, plants do not feel wind-chill. When you see low temperatures predicted, focus on the actual temperature rather than wind-chill. If it's getting down to 38 degrees with a wind-chill of 25 degrees, you do not have to worry about a freeze.

Plan now for freezing temperatures. Decide what tender plants you will choose to protect and what will be left to its own chances. Make sure you have enough materials on hand to protect those plants that you will cover. Suitable materials include plastic, fabric sheets, blankets, tarps and cardboard boxes to name a few. Each plant to be protected needs to have a covering large enough to extend to the ground. It also helps to have stakes available to drive into the ground around plants to help support the coverings over the plants and bricks to weight down the bottom edges of the covering.

Keep garden beds free from weeds. A two to three inch layer of mulch will prevent most cool season weed seeds from sprouting. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Winterize your garden tools before you put them away. Clean and sharpen tools, apply a thin layer of protective oil to the blades, and coat wooden handles with sealer, tung oil or varnish to protect the wood and keep it in good shape. Drain the gas from lawn mowers and other gas powered equipment(see your owner's manual for specific recommendations).

Harvest bunching green onions and shallots by digging up a clump, breaking off most of the clump and replanting the smaller part. Take the rest into the kitchen for cooking. The part that you replant will continue to grow and form a clump that can be harvested again later.



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For more information visit LSUAgCenter.com

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GNO Gardening newsletter is designed and edited by Chris Dunaway.