

CHRISTMAS TREES

December is the season to Deck the Halls, and one of the most popular ways to decorate is with a Christmas tree! Did you know that British Columbia is home to over 400 Christmas tree growers? Christmas trees are often grown on barren slopes or under power lines where nothing else will grow. Did you know that British Columbia supplies about 50% of the Christmas trees sold in Alberta, Saskatchewan and export markets?



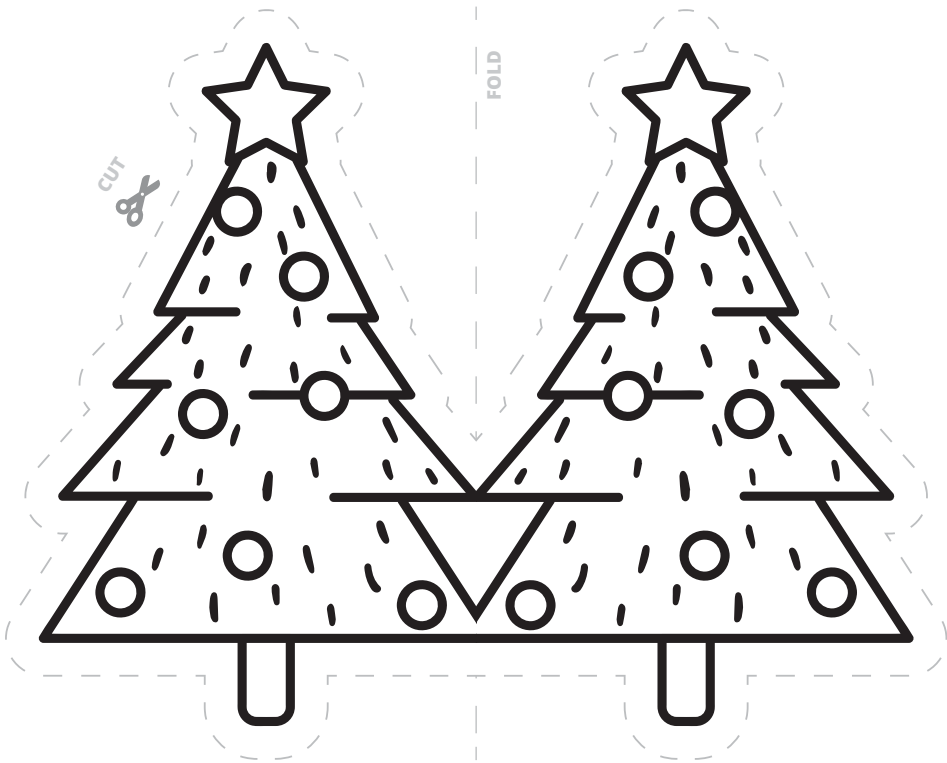
Each year about 500,000 trees are harvested from Christmas tree farms located in the Kootenays, Fraser Valley, on Vancouver Island and in the Thompson and Okanagan areas as well as Prince George, Terrace and Smithers. Seeds are planted in greenhouses. One-year-old seedlings are planted and grown on to be harvested in 6-10 years. Modern farming techniques are used to produce nicely shaped trees.

All Christmas trees are coniferous—the name conifer means “cone bearer”. All coniferous trees hold their seeds in cones. Conifers are also called evergreens since they hold on to their needles (leaves) all year long. The needles are covered in a natural wax to help the needle hold moisture and keep from freezing. Christmas trees hold their value even after Christmas. Trees are made up of carbon and nitrogen – important nutrients for other plants and trees. Through shredding and composting these nutrients can be recycled back into the soil.

At school a Christmas tree should never dry out. By following these simple steps your tree will stay fresh right until Christmas break.

- Cut 1 cm off the base of the tree - making a clean cut will let the tree absorb water more efficiently.
- Set the tree in a sturdy, deep container.
- Keep the bottom of the tree immersed in water at all times - daily watering is important. A deep container is necessary for a constant supply of water over the weekend.
- Place the tree in a cool place away from any heat source.
- Remove the tree from the school before the break.





Use these trees templates for:

- Christmas cards (increase the size and cut out the pair)
- Gift tags (cut out just one, hole punch the star and insert a string)
- Garlands (cut out and fasten together in a long strand)



Since ancient times, Christmas trees have been a part of festive celebrations during the winter season. Long before Christian traditions, people brought pieces of evergreen plants and trees into their homes, as they believed they would keep away evil spirits and illness.

In North America, the winter solstice falls between December 21 and 22. It is the shortest day, and longest night of the year. In ancient times the sun was considered a god, and people believed that as the days grew shorter, it meant the sun was feeling poorly. When the days started to get longer, they knew that the sun was feeling better and would then decorate with evergreen boughs to remind them of the plentiful summer days to come.

The Romans would celebrate the solstice with a feast in honour of the god of Agriculture, Saturn. This was a special time when everyone would feast together and exchange gifts. The ancient Druids of Europe decorated again with evergreen boughs but this time as a symbol of life that was everlasting.

The Christmas colours of red and green came from a German tradition when red apples were carefully hung on green pine trees in celebration of Adam and Eve's Day. Later, the boughs of the trees were filled with candies shaped like fruits or vegetables or gingerbread cookies. It was a German baron who first introduced the Christmas tree into Canada. In 1781, in a small Quebec village, he decorated a giant balsam fir with white candles. Almost 80 years later, the next record of a Christmas tree was from Halifax, where a rich merchant decorated a huge tree to please his German wife.

The people in British Columbia are diverse. Whether Christian or not, many enjoy Christmas trees as a part of their holiday celebration. In BC, the primary type of Christmas tree is the **Douglas fir**. Others include the **Grand fir**, **Noble fir**, **Subalpine fir**, **Scotch pine**, and **White pine**, as well as various **spruces**. All are native species with excellent fragrance and slender needles suitable for hanging ornaments.

Find a Christmas Tree Farm: <https://farm-explorer-bc-bcaitc.hub.arcgis.com/>
Grow BC's Christmas Tree Story - www.bcaitc.ca
BC Christmas Tree Association - <https://www.bcchristmastrees.ca>
Canadian Christmas Tree Association - <https://canadianchristmastrees.ca>
BC Farm Fresh - <https://www.bcfarmfresh.com>

