

TREES

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office in Eugene. "You can look for the one that just strikes you as the right tree. For many people it's a family tradition."

Most ranger stations have maps of areas suitable for Christmas trees. Douglas firs are the most common trees in permit areas; however, there are also White and Noble firs and Lodgepole pines at higher elevations in permit areas. Permits are usually

for trees less than 12 feet, and the topping of trees is not allowed.

Many ranger stations, farms and tree lots provide refreshments and tips for caring for Christmas trees. Wherever a tree comes from, it is important that all trees be placed in water to keep them from drying out and becoming fire hazards.

"They're actually not prone to fire unless they get real dry, but anything that gets real dry is gonna burn," Pepiot said.

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MISTLETOE

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ball of mistletoe decorated with evergreens, ribbons and ornaments. When a young lady stood under a kissing ball at Christmastime, she could not refuse to be kissed. A kiss could mean deep romance or lasting friendship. If a girl was not kissed, it was thought she would stay unmarried during the next year.

The beliefs that mistletoe has healing powers and can spark love stem from the same Scandinavian myth. According to the myth, the god of peace was killed by mistletoe, and his mother was able to restore him back to life. The tears of joy she shed were said to be the white berries on the mistletoe, and she kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree it grew on. The moral of the legend was that if someone stood under mistletoe, no harm would come to him or her — only a kiss as a token of love.

Today mistletoe carries a similar tradition. Many people use mistletoe to decorate their homes and holiday celebrations. If two people are found to be standing under mistletoe, they are expected to kiss.

"I think that the tradition of using mistletoe should be incorporated into more than Christmas parties because it means love," University sophomore Jayne Mercer said. "People don't have to kiss — they can hug, too."



Photo Illustration Adam Amato Photo Editor

Mistletoe has traditional uses dating back several centuries including the popular holiday 'kissing ball.'

Unfortunately, mistletoe is becoming increasingly difficult to find during the holiday season. Many florist shops in Eugene do not carry fresh mistletoe because it is poisonous if ingested. Synthetic mistletoe can usually be found at grocery or craft stores.

Lisa Catto is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



The O'Hara Catholic School, located at 715 W. 18th Ave., has been selling trees for more than 20 years.

Tim Kupsick
Freelance
Photographer

CONSUME

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United Methodist Church's Wesley Center. "It seems each year it starts a day earlier."

Although people from all backgrounds — religious or otherwise — now celebrate Christmas, Dec. 25 is in essence a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. While it is not exactly clear on what day Jesus was born, the celebration had been incorporated into the Christian calendar as early as the 11th century A.D.

Reverend Ann Bowersox of the Presbyterian Campus Ministry said that even if people do not observe the holiday religiously, but instead use it to spend quality time with their families, it's still a good thing.

"What is not a good thing is the commercialization," she said. "People spend more money than they have." She added that people get so caught up in giving gifts that they rack up debts because they believe they ought to.

But the commercial holiday frenzy is a thread of the country's capitalist fabric. Americans purchase goods and services worth roughly \$7.6 trillion a year, according to an article in the Dec. 1 edition of The New York Times.

"I think it has to do with how this country runs," Bowersox said.

Junior Allison Prasad agrees, saying "everyone is trying to make a buck out of something."

"(Christmas) is supposed to be about the birth of Christ, but people are more concerned

about the gift giving," Prasad said. "People commodify the celebration."

However, Bowersox said people are starting to realize that spending the most money is not the goal of Christmas. Some are living by the slogan, "remember the reason for the season."

"Among Christians, there's been a move to simplify," she said, adding that one way a person could do this is by making homemade gifts.

Prasad said she does buy gifts, but they don't have to be big or extravagant. What matters is that it's "something from the heart." She said the most valuable part about Christmas is the time spent with family and friends.

While commercialization may have increased, Hajdu-Paulen said the religious aspects of Christmas are still strong.

"I think it's important for Christians to claim that season," he said. He said for instance, there is a move to spiritually prepare for the holiday by observing the Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, through prayer and reflection.

White, who is Catholic, said at the core, Christmas is a religious holiday. However, he has nothing against people who view it differently, and he too is part of the gift-giving and gift-receiving network.

"We live in a society where everyone has different beliefs and everyone has a right to celebrate how they want," he said.

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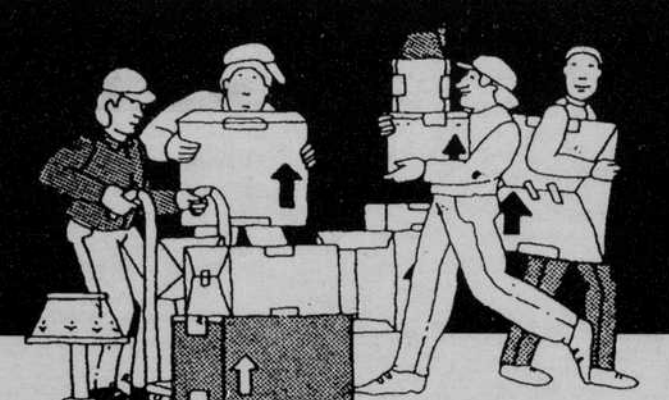
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