

visit a tree farm

If your inner Clark Griswold is alive and well, a trip to the local tree farm may be right up your alley. There's nothing quite like cutting down your own tree and bringing it home to your living room. You can pick your own tree and fill your home with a fresh pine scent.

So find a tree farm near you to support local, sustainable business practices. You won't be disappointed.

Planning a trip to your local tree farm, many of which feature fun activities for children and families.

What to bring

Check in with your local tree farm to see if saws are provided. They usually are and for a small fee, the tree farm professionals will cut your tree down for you. If you are allowed to cut it down yourself, this can be a great way to start a fun tradition with those in your family old enough to safely handle a saw.

Other things to bring include:

- **Ties & Ropes:** Don't forget that you're not just cutting down your tree, you have to get it home too! Bring the proper tie-down materials to safely transport it.

- **Plastic Wrap or Blanket:** Trees can scratch your car or truck, so sure to bring some plastic wrap or a blanket to serve as a protective layer between it and the tree.

- **Snacks & Drinks:** Many tree farms feature bouncy houses, hayrides, sleigh rides, Santa visits, petting zoos and other fun activities for the kids. They may or may not have concessions available so it's always smart to pack some as Plan B.

- **Old Clothes:** Cutting down your own tree isn't exactly clean and tidy. Dress in old clothes and hiking boots if you want to be comfortable without the worry of ruining your outfit with sap and dirt.

- **Cash:** If you're enlisting the help of a staff member to cut down and carry the tree to your vehicle, it's good practice to give them a cash tip. This is difficult work after all. You'll also need cash for refreshments and any gift shops that may be on the premises.



Christmas lighting

There are lighting options for every decorating purpose, including various sizes, colors and applications. Finding the right lighting for you depends on how and where you plan to use it.

As with decorations, the perfect time to score low-priced lighting is immediately following the Christmas season. That's when retailers big and small look to clear out their holiday inventory,

offering products at deep discounts.

Check in with your locally owned hardware stores first to support the business owners.

Indoor Lighting

Soft, subtle lighting is the way to go for decorating your interior, while you can get away

with brighter options outside.

Look around at your overall design scheme and decide if colored or white lights would look best. Lighting is available in traditional wattage or more efficient LED styles.

Don't just light your tree. Your mantle, window frames and staircase banister all can use a little brightening up in the spirit of the holidays.

Outdoor Lighting

Sometimes outdoor decorations aren't enough. You have to accentuate them with the proper lighting to really make them stand out. Solar lighting is both versatile and portable, and it can light up your stand-up display for all hours of the night.