



**HOLIDAY TRADITIONS**

# Choosing the Perfect Tree

Of the nearly 35 million new Christmas trees purchased every year, 13 million are artificial and 22 million are real, according to the American Christmas Tree Association.

And while the convenience of a sapless, needle-less tree that stores easily for perennial use is alluring to many, it's hard to build a tradition around an artificial tree. But taking a family trip to the local tree farm to select that perfect symbol of the holidays? Now, that's a tradition.

Real trees become an extended family member for a month or so. We choose them, bring them home, set them up, decorate them and spend hours in front of them. They cover our gifts for safekeeping. They stimulate all of our senses – from the piney smell to the bright lights.

That's why choosing the perfect tree for your family is a vital part of the holiday season. Tree height, width and overall health are important factors to consider when you and your family go on your tree-picking excursion.

Here's what to look for in that perfect tree – and how to make it a special, enjoyable experience this winter:

## **Involve the Children**

If you're bringing along your children, nieces or nephews, make sure to ask their opinion about the different trees. Give them options while you're walking around, being sure to check out trees of varying heights, prices and colors.

Listening to their thoughts will make them feel like part of the decision-making process instead of simply being along for the ride.

## **Learning How to Pick the Perfect Tree**

You can also use the experience to teach children what to look for in a tree. The American Christmas Tree Association says to avoid trees with these features:

- Broken branches.
- Obvious wear and tear.
- Dirty or insect-filled trees.

Consider these factors when you're deciding on a tree. Also be sure to premeasure your doorways and ceiling height to make sure your new tree will fit nicely in your home.

