

Silver Bells...

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Ready your home for holiday guests

by Metro Creative Connection

The song may say, “there’s no place like home for the holidays,” yet many people find their holidays are just as well spent in someone else’s abode. The popular motor club federation AAA says that more than 90 million Americans journey 50 miles or more from home during the year-end holiday season, and each year the number of travelers increases.

When opening their homes to loved ones and friends, hosts want to make their guests feel welcome. Fortunately, there are many ways to do just that.

Establish a cozy nook

Determine where your guests will be sleeping. Do not worry if you do not have a separate guest room. There are other things you can do, such as giving up your own bedroom for the duration of their stay. Otherwise, turn another spot into a guest area. A den or living room with a pullout sofa also might work. Children’s rooms also are another idea. Let young children camp out in the living room or the basement while you turn their rooms into spots for your guests. The kids will appreciate the novelty of setting up sleeping bags, and guests will get some measure of privacy.

Have separate guest amenities

Invest in some lush towels and wash cloths reserved for guests. Also, have comfortable sheets on hand. Be sure all linens are freshly washed, and have a drawer or two available in case guests want to unpack their suitcases. Keep some toiletries stocked as well. A few extra toothbrushes, mouthwash, soap, and other personal

items may be needed to accommodate forgetful guests.

Provide creature comforts

Guests won’t be used to the rooms in your house, so be sure that you offer a light for a nightstand and an alarm clock. Nightlights placed in the bathroom or hallway can illuminate unfamiliar surroundings. Keep a fan on hand so that guests can adjust the temperature in their rooms and also if they need a little white noise while they sleep. A tray with books, magazines and the Wi-Fi code also may be appreciated.

Separate bathroom facilities

If possible, devote one bathroom in the house for guests’ use. This way they will have all the privacy they need. Ask if there are any special products they like to use in the bathroom, helping to cut down on the items guests need to bring with them.

Stock favorite foods

Make a list of the foods that your guests enjoy and plan a shopping trip to stock up on these items. Encourage guests to have free reign of the kitchen, helping themselves to snacks or whatever is desired. Remember to ask about any dietary restrictions, including allergies.

Deep clean your home

Clear away unnecessary clutter and give floors a fresh wash or vacuuming, especially if you have pets. Pay special attention to showers and the bathroom itself. You don’t want guests tripping over your belongings.

A few special and simple touches can quickly prepare a home for holiday hosting and entertaining.

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EAST OREGONIAN

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Herald

Look inside for great holiday recipes

Christmas tree varieties and care



by Metro Creative Connection

An evergreen tree decked out in lights and ornaments is one of the universal symbols of the holiday season. The Christmas tree tradition is believed to have originated in Germany in the 15th or 16th centuries, when trees

were decorated with edibles, such as nuts and fruits. They were later decorated with candles and eventually lights.

Through the centuries, people have trekked to forests, Christmas tree farms and commercial lots to pick the perfect trees for their holiday displays. The

National Christmas Tree Association says more than 33 million real trees are purchased each year, making the tree business a billion-dollar industry. While there are scores of evergreen varieties, certain tree types are more popular than others and thus more available for purchase. The following are some of

the more popular trees come Christmas time.

- **Eastern Redcedar:** Branches of the tree are compact and form a pyramid-shaped crown. The trees should be a dark, shiny green color. The eastern redcedar is not a true cedar tree, but a member of the juniper family. This tree can make a great cut tree with a home-spun look and a pungent fragrance.

- **Leyland Cypress:** This cypress is one of the more popular Christmas trees in the southeastern United States. The tree will be very dark green to almost gray in color. It has little aroma. Some people choose the Leyland because it does not produce sap, which is great for those with sap allergies.

- **Colorado Blue Spruce:** An attractive blue-green foliage and a good symmetrical form is what attracts many people to the blue spruce. The Colorado Blue Spruce has an excellent natural shape and requires little pruning to look like the perfect Christmas tree. It’s not

very fragrant, but the tree needles may give off an unpleasant odor when crushed.

- **Scotch Pine:** A classic conical shape and very good needle retention help make the Scotch pine a popular tree to cut for the holidays. Scotch pines also are quite prevalent thanks to the tree’s adaptability to a wide range of climates.

- **Eastern White Pine:** A delicate green color and long needles are found on this tree. Another popular pine, the rich fragrance of the white pine may make it preferable to those who like their homes to smell of evergreen.

- **Douglas Fir:** The Douglas fir is one of the foremost Christmas tree species in the United States. It has soft needles that are dark green in color. Those needles radiate in all directions from the branches to give the tree a full look. The needles, when crushed, have a sweet fragrance. Douglas firs tend to live long when cut.

- **Fraser Fir:** Another popular fir for Christmas is

the Fraser fir. The needles are bicolored, with dark green on top and silver on the bottom. More fragrant than its cousin, the Douglas, the Fraser also boasts a slender profile, which makes it suitable for smaller rooms.

Christmas tree maintenance: Nothing can guarantee the health and appearance of a tree after it is brought into a home. But choosing a recently cut tree that has good needle retention can help. Here are other tips for a long-lasting tree.

- Use a sharp saw to cut an inch off of the trunk base to remove the sappy covering that forms from cutting. This will improve water intake.

- Fill a tree stand reservoir with warm water. Expect the tree to drink heavily in the beginning.

- Keep the reservoir filled every day and check to see how much water the tree is using.

- Place the tree far from heaters or other drying sources.