

NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County Center

December 2023

Home & Consumer Horticulture Newsletter



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! In the spirit of the holiday season, here are a few facts about the North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry. These facts are derived from the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association.

Did you know that North Carolina produces approximately 20% of the Real Christmas Trees in the U.S.? The main Real Christmas Tree produced in the state is the Fraser Fir. There are approximately 1,300 growers producing an estimated 40,000 acres of Fraser Fir in the state. The North Carolina Fraser fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America and is shipped into every state in the U.S., the Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, Japan and other places all over the world.

A few more local facts to consider, we have several Christmas tree growers right here in Yancey County. We have several growers that offer the option of choose and cut right off of the farm. So consider purchasing a real Christmas tree this holiday season. When you purchase a real Christmas tree from a local grower, you are not only supporting a local farmer, but you are also investing into the local economy.

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The NC Cooperative Extension-Yancey County Center "Home & Consumer Horticulture Newsletter" provides relevant up-to-date, university research based information for home owners, gardeners, and other residents of Yancey County.

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Tips for Maintaining Real Christmas Trees

Making trees last through the Holiday Season

There are many in Yancey County that follow the tradition of putting up a Christmas Tree. In our area, with several Christmas Tree growers easily accessible locally, this tradition is even better when using a real Christmas tree. A real tree adds a great scent, and in my family, we also have a family outing every year when we go to the farm to pick out our tree. After you purchase and set up a real tree, it is very important to maintain it properly. If you plan to purchase a tree this year, here are a few tips that you might want to consider.

1 Choose the Quality Tree Possible

To get the most out of a real Christmas tree, it should be as fresh as possible and of the best possible quality. Purchasing from a "choose and cut" tree farm is the best option because that is the "freshest" tree that can be purchased. If purchasing a tree from a lot, the quality of the tree should be considered. This is a factor that is directly related to how the tree has been stored and handled since it was harvested. The tree should be full of water, and should be protected as much as possible from sun and wind. On the lot, look to see if the trees are displayed in water. Look to see if the ground or mulch is wet from periodic watering. Take note of the condition of the lot to see if the trees are stored in a shady area. Consider if the tree is as heavy as it should be. A heavy tree is an indication that the tree is heavy with water. Consider if the needles are rich, dark-green color. Dry trees are often bleached out to a lighter olive or grey-green color. Consider if the outside needles stay on the tree. Also consider if the needles are fresh. Very fresh needles will snap when bent. Somewhat dry tree needles will bend, rather than break. And lastly, take a look at the trunk of the tree. The tree is mostly likely still fresh if the bottom of the tree is sticky.

2 Prepare the Tree Properly At Home

When the tree is finally brought home, it is important to prepare it properly by cutting off at least 1/2-inch of the trunk so that the tree will take up water easier. If the tree needs to be stored before taking it inside, make sure to set it up in the shade in a bucket of water. Display the tree inside in a stand that can hold at least 1 gallon of water. Never add anything to the water. All a real tree needs is fresh water. Make sure to display the tree away from heat sources. Make sure that the tree is not displayed over a floor heat vent, or under a ceiling heat vent. If placing a tree near a window, be mindful of sun exposure. Closing and lowering blinds or curtains may be needed if the tree is displayed in a window that is on the south or southwest facing portion of the house. When decorating, Use lights that are in good working condition and that are UL certified. Make sure that the tree is taking up water before you begin decorating. If it is not, making another fresh cut to the trunk may be necessary.



3 Care for the Tree Properly While in the Home

Throughout the time that real Christmas trees are in the home, it is important to take appropriate steps to maintain them. This includes checking the water level in the tree stand every day. Always unplug any Christmas lights before leaving the home, or when sleeping and leaving a tree unattended. And also, be mindful of lighting any candles or having any source of open flame near a tree as this could be a fire hazard.

Conclusion

Do consider purchasing a real Christmas tree this holiday season! Real Christmas trees can greatly enhance the holiday experience and you are supporting a local farmer. By choosing the highest quality tree possible, preparing a purchased tree properly at home, and caring for the tree properly while it is enjoyed, your real Christmas tree can be enjoyed for the entire season.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information about purchasing or maintaining a real Christmas tree, feel free to contact us at the NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County Center by calling 828.682.6186. You can also contact me by email (david_davis@ncsu.edu).



@YanceyCES



Check out our website:
<http://www.yancey.ces.ncsu.edu>

NC Cooperative Extension- Yancey County Master Gardener™ Ornament Workshops Fundraiser

The NC Cooperative Extension-Yancey County Extension Master Gardeners will be hosting 2 opportunities to attend an ornament making workshop. At this workshop, participants will get to learn and gain hands-experience making their own “Garden Gnome” and “Appalachian Pioneer Broom ornaments. The workshops will be held at the **Yancey County Center (30 E HWY 19E Bypass)** on **Sat., December 9**. The morning workshop will take place 10 am - 12 pm. The afternoon workshop will be held 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm. **Pre-registration is required to reserve a spot!** The cost to attend the workshop is \$25 per person which covers materials. Proceeds will benefit the Extension Master Gardener Program™ in Yancey County. **For more information, or to register, call 828.682.6186 or send an email to david_davis@ncsu.edu.**



Students completed the last session of initial Volunteer Training for the 2023 Extension Master Gardener Program on December 5, 2023.

NC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program™ Updates

- **The year end deadline is approaching for Certified NC State Extension Master Gardeners in Yancey County to complete and report both volunteer service hours, and continuing education hours for 2023.** The year end deadline is December 31! To maintain status as Certified Extension Master Gardeners, participants must complete 20 hour of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education. We have a few remaining opportunities to volunteer prior to the deadline. We do not have any opportunities to complete continuing education hours at this time. If you have questions about volunteering opportunities, or continuing education hours, please send an email to David Davis (david_davis@ncsu.edu) or call the Yancey County Center.

- **We have 7 new Extension Master Gardener Volunteers in Yancey County that have now completed their initial training.** We will be welcoming them as “Interns” into the Extension Master Gardener program on **Tuesday, January 2, 2024 with a celebration beginning at 5 pm.** All Certified Extension Master Gardeners and Extension Master Gardener Alumni in Yancey County are invited to attend. ***If you would like to attend, please contact the Yancey County Center by calling or send an email to David Davis (david_davis@ncsu.edu)*** to help us with meal planning. If you have not been active in the Extension Master Gardener Program in Yancey County in a few years, this will also be a great time to learn about new changes to the program, how you might get involved through new volunteer opportunities and to learn about other activities that are planned in the upcoming year.
- **We will be conducting monthly Extension Master Gardener Meetings in 2024!** In addition to offering opportunities for continuing education, we will be sharing special opportunities exclusively available for Extension Master Gardeners in Yancey County. One of those opportunities will include bringing back Extension Master Gardener trips. Our trip team is already working on plans for possible trips for Extension Master Gardeners in 2024! These meetings will also cover volunteer opportunities available in the upcoming month. These meetings will be available to Active Certified Extension Master Gardeners, Extension Master Gardener Interns, and Extension Master Gardener Students in Yancey County. Our next meeting will be the celebration to welcome the 2023 Extension Master Gardener Cohort into the program taking place on January 2.
- **Do you want to become a Certified Extension Master Gardener Volunteer in Yancey County?** Let us know by adding your name to the initial training interest list or requesting more information about this program. Training for new volunteers will be conducted when we get at least 5 committed participants. Initial training will only be offered in the fall of the year (August - December) when the minimum number of participants have completed applications and submitted the training fee. The training is only offered during our normal office hours (Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 4:30 PM). Training may be offered in the mornings or afternoons, is usually only offered 1 day per week, and the time of day that it is offered will depend upon the availability of the majority of participants approved to be in the program.

Disposing of Holiday Decorations

Holiday greenery can bring much cheer throughout the holiday season. Purchasing wreaths made out of greenery from a local tree farm or nursery is a great practice as this supports local farmers. One can also purchase greenery and make their own wreaths, mantle pieces, garland and other decorations. Purchasing that greenery locally is also highly encouraged as it also supports local farmers. But there are a few things to consider at the end of the season before discarding decorations at the end of the holiday season.

Consider the chances of spreading disease in how you choose to dispose of holiday decorations. Boxwood wreaths in particular should be avoided all together. That is because they can harbor disease pathogens that cause Boxwood Blight. This disease has already nearly devastated boxwood production in our area. Many farmers have had to destroy their nurseries because they could not sell their boxwoods when they have gotten this disease. Many landscapes in our area have traditionally included boxwood. However, boxwoods have died out and had to be replaced. We do not have a good way to manage this disease in the landscape or in the nursery.



Consider that many add synthetic decorations to their Christmas tree or greenery. Many often add plastic or other synthetic decorations to add color to their arrangements. Decorations made out of plastic or other synthetic materials are cheap and readily available. This may include various ornaments, ribbon, fake berries and cones, or other types of decorations. If you decide to dispose of holiday greenery in the compost bin, or by putting them into the Christmas Tree Disposal Bin at the local convenience center, make sure to completely remove any synthetic decorations. Also, make sure to disassemble any wreaths or other decorations to remove wreath rings, wire or other synthetic materials.

One way to dispose of Christmas Trees in particular is to turn them into wildlife habitat. Remove all decorations or synthetic materials and put them out in the “back”, un-kept portion of the landscape. Brush piles can become habitat for many different types of wildlife. They can provide shelter, and even be used as a food source for wildlife. There are also ways to take old trees and decorations and turn them into wildlife feeders.

Are You Ready for the 2024 Plant Sale?

NC Cooperative Extension of Yancey County will be taking orders for the spring plant sale before you know it! We will again be offering several different varieties of apples, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberry plants and much more. We begin taking orders in January or February. Here are a few tips to prepare for this year's plant sale:



- Contact us now to be added to our plant sale email list. We send out order forms to this list and announce plant availability
- Complete your order early! This includes making payment. Orders will not be completed until payment has been received.
- Want to learn how to properly grow and care for the trees or plants you plan to purchase? Keep an eye out for class announcements. We are planning several classes this year that highlight best practices related to growing strawberries, apples, blueberries and more

If you would like to be added to our plant sale email list, send an email to David Davis (david_davis@ncsu.edu) or contact the NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County Center by calling 828.682.6186.

Ornament Workshop Fundraiser

Join us for a special workshop to make
these two Christmas ornaments!



**\$25 per
person**

**Saturday,
December 9, 2023**

**Pre-
registration
Required**

Location:

NC Cooperative Extension
Yancey County Center
30 E HWY 19E Bypass Rd.
Burnsville, NC

Choose 1 of the following
times to attend:

10 am - 12 pm

-OR-

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

For More Information or to Register contact:
David Davis (david_davis@ncsu.edu) or call (828) 682-6186

All proceeds benefit Yancey County Extension Master Gardeners!