



Q. Help! My family is pushing for a pre-lighted artificial Christmas tree this year, but I'm still holding out for the real thing. Can you give me some hard information to support my choice?

A. Sure! For starters, the Christmas tree crop will remain in the ground for 7-10 years, providing wildlife habitat, preventing soil erosion, and enhancing the visual aspect of the environment. Christmas trees can be grown in soil that may not support other crops. Christmas tree farmers plant a new tree in place of every tree that is cut, and consumers can recycle their trees as chips or mulch.

As with all trees, real Christmas trees decrease the earth-warming greenhouse effect in our atmosphere by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. The one million acres of Christmas trees grown in the U.S. supply the daily oxygen needs of 18 million people. Trees also remove dust and pollen from the air.

Since 1851, when Mark Carr had the first Christmas-tree retail lot in New York City, buying a real tree has supported American jobs and local economies. The nation's Christmas-tree farms collectively employ 100,000 people. New Hampshire's Christmas tree and fresh-wreath industry pumps \$6 million into our state's economy each year.

On the other hand, 85 percent of artificial trees sold in the U.S. are manufactured in China. Manufactured from non-biodegradable plastics or metals, fake trees may contain toxins such as lead. They may last for years in your home, but will remain for centuries in a landfill.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., and W 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu)