

## Decorating Naturally - The Forest's Christmas Gift to All of Us.

Over the last decade, more and more people have started to use natural products for their seasonal decorating needs. In most cases, they do so because they like creating their own personalized decorations with products which come from the lands around them instead of factories thousands and thousands of miles away. Many people indicate that the look, feel and smell nature brings them more into tune with the true meaning of the season.

The best known natural product is of course the Christmas tree. In early times, people simply went to the forest and selected a wild tree. Today, Christmas trees are crop that is grown and harvested for the Christmas market. Natural trees provide colour, texture, and fragrance to any holiday occasion and when used properly are a safe and traditional part of the holiday season.

Environmentally conscious consumers know that, unlike plastic trees, natural Christmas trees are a non-polluting and 100% biodegradable product. While these trees grow, they offer habitat for many wild creatures, stabilize soils, clean the air, trap and conserve water supplies, and offer employment and income to many Islanders. Balsam Fir is the most popular choice by far with Island consumers but several species of pine and spruce are also commonly used during the season.

The same evergreen characteristics which make good Christmas trees also lend themselves to decorative wreaths and garlands. Fir and pine boughs provide an excellent base for cones, seeds and berries all of which come from the forest. Clipping a few branches has little or no effect on most trees and can be repeated year after year as part of your holiday preparations. Other Acadian Forest species such as red osier dogwood, a common shrub found growing in ditches and on disturbed soils across PEI, can be woven into wreaths and garlands to add a hint to deep red.

Island Christmas trees, whether you buy them at the tree farm or at a local retail outlet, provide excellent value for the money. In fact, for many people going out into the country to a favourite U-Cut Christmas tree operation, is a central part of their holiday plans. They know they have selected the freshest tree possible - one which suits their home and budget. For a list of a PEI Christmas tree growers visit: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/go/Christmastrees>