

Holiday Evergreens

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Choose your favorite:

Canaan Fir

(*Abies balsamea* var. *phanerolepis*)

Fragrance: Excellent, strong balsam scent.

Availability/Cost: Relatively new on the market, becoming more popular. Relatively expensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent.

Decorating: The needles are very soft, and the branches are very sturdy. There is generally plenty of room for ornaments.

Other: A variety of Balsam fir, this tree is very similar in traits to a Fraser fir, but has longer needles.

Colorado Blue Spruce

(*Picea pungens*)

Fragrance: Relatively subtle, woody.

Availability/Cost: Moderately available and relatively expensive.

Durability: Spruce needle retention is very poor compared to firs and pines; however, Blue Spruce is considered the best of the spruces. Only at its best for two weeks.

Decorating: Needles are extremely prickly. Branches are very sturdy, so excellent for heavier ornaments. There is plenty of room for many ornaments.

Other: Color varies greatly from dark green to an attractive powdery blue. It is essential to keep spruces well watered to maximize needle retention. Cooler room temperatures will also help. Not a traditional holiday tree, but admired for its perfect conical form, sturdy branches, and blue color.

Douglas Fir

(*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)

Fragrance: Excellent, sweet when crushed.

Availability/Cost: Widely available, relatively expensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent; holds color well.

Decorating: Needles are very soft. Branches are only moderately stiff (not the best for heavy ornaments); moderate space for ornaments between branches.

Other: The most popular variety in the U.S., considered by many THE classic holiday tree.

Fraser Fir

(*Abies fraseri*)

Fragrance: Excellent.

Availability/Cost: Widely available, relatively expensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent; among the best in retaining its fragrance.

Decorating: Needles are soft. Branches are extremely sturdy, and there is plenty of room to hang many ornaments.

Other: Called by some the “Cadillac of Christmas trees” due to its classic fragrance, longevity, and sturdiness.

Norfolk Island Pine

(*Araucaria heterophylla*)

Fragrance: Very little.

Availability/Cost: Available from many nurseries that sell houseplants. A good-sized tree is relatively expensive, but can be utilized year after year.

Durability: This houseplant does best with cool night temperatures and high humidity. If possible, mist frequently or run a humidifier.

Decorating: Needles are very soft. Branches are flexible and not ideal for many heavy ornaments.

Other: This a good houseplant alternative to a cut tree. Norfolk Island Pine is not cold hardy in this area and must be grown indoors in winter.

Norway Spruce

(*Picea abies*)

Fragrance: Relatively subtle, but very nice.

Availability/Cost: Less common than other trees; moderate price.

Durability: Extremely poor needle retention compared to all other trees.

Decorating: Needles are very prickly. Beautiful conical form with sturdy branches that leave plenty of room for ornaments.

Other: Admired for its shiny dark-green needles and beautiful shape, the Norway spruce is among the most popular Christmas trees in Europe.

Scots Pine/Scotch Pine

(*Pinus sylvestris*)

Fragrance: Nice pine aroma which lasts throughout season, although not as fragrant as the firs.

Availability/Cost: Widely available, among the most inexpensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent even when dry.

Decorating: Needles are very soft. Branches are flexible, not ideal for heavy ornaments. Tree is often very full without much room for hanging ornaments.

Other: Has a characteristic rounded profile. Among the most common holiday trees in the U.S., although perhaps slightly less popular than a generation ago, when it was widely considered the classic Christmas tree.

White/Concolor Fir

(*Abies concolor*)

Fragrance: Excellent, very citrusy.

Availability/Cost: Less widely available, relatively expensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent.

Decorating: Needles are very soft and branches are very sturdy, but the fullness of the foliage can leave relatively less room for hanging ornaments.

Other: This tree has relatively long, silvery blue needles giving a unique appearance.

White Pine

(*Pinus strobus*)

Fragrance: Pine scent, relatively weak.

Availability/Cost: Moderately available and inexpensive.

Durability: Needle retention is excellent.

Decorating: Needles are very soft and feathery. Branches are very flexible and cannot stand up to heavy ornaments. Foliage is generally very full, not leaving much room for hanging ornaments.

Other: Due to relative lack of fragrance, this is considered a good tree for those with allergies.