

# A MESSAGE OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

The purchase of a Real Christmas tree is a link in a chain that helps to keep our Earth and the spirit of Christmas alive.

## ***READ THIS...***

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An artificial tree is made of plastic, which is made from petroleum. It is not biodegradable. Once used, it is gone forever. Energy is used and pollution is created in the processing of the plastic and metal in the tree. A real tree, once used, quickly returns to the earth from which it came. Nothing is wasted. The grower plants another tree to replace it. Man duplicates nature's perfect recycling.

Consider what a plantation of natural Christmas trees does for the environment. It tempers winds. It suppresses loud sounds. It collects dust. It moderates temperature. It dissipates odors. It provides wildlife habitat. It acts as a watershed and prevents runoff and flooding. It prevents soil erosion. Above all it breathes in carbon dioxide, which people, animals and fires breathe out, and it breathes out large quantities of oxygen which people and animals need to live.

Cutting the trees does not diminish this, because young trees do all of this better than the old ones. The tree you are using for Christmas will be replaced next spring with a seedling to do the job all over again.

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## INTRODUCTION

So you would like to retail Christmas trees. You will need commitment, money, a good location and top quality merchandise.

Complement the above requirements with imagination and stamina and you could enjoy the accomplishments and profits which accompany success.

Christmas trees are sold by thoughtfully applied proven methods of merchandising, displaying, advertising and salesmanship of quality products.

You must understand that retailing is a complex science on which major retail chains spend enormous amounts of time and money educating themselves. Changing times are the prevailing reasons for continued research. Consumer shopping habits are strongly influenced by these changing times.

Comparing seasonal businesses, the live-cut retail Christmas tree business is second to none in annual sales volume, in spite of the fact that there is very little organized training and education. Because of the absence of that help, this manual will prove to be of great value to the newcomer as well as the veteran.

To get the maximum benefit from this publication, share the information with your associates and employees. Each time you read this book you will gain greater knowledge.

May the increased growth of your experience and profit be mirrored by your fair and ethical business practices.



### "Profitable Christmas Tree Retailing"

## PROFIT IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

You can earn in excess of \$10,000 in one month, if you've got what it takes. There are Christmas tree retailers who have made more than \$25,000 in a season., There are some who have lost more than that in a season.

To simplify your decision you are urged to forget the retail Christmas tree business unless you have a minimum

of \$10,000 to \$25,000 speculative capital to invest.

## DECISION AND COMMITMENT

Prior to venturing into any business, one should examine and evaluate all the facts and details which influence and comprise a successful, profitable operation.

Facts which may influence your decision are:

1. Are you financially able to promote this business?
2. Do you have the managerial and retail experience required?
3. Do you have a good business location?
4. Do you have the time, ability and personnel needed?
5. Have you studied the economic climate in your area?
6. Do you have an honest, dependable, and knowledgeable supplier?
7. Are all the necessary facilities available, such as electrical power, water, advertising, media, etc?

From a merchandising point of view, the Christmas tree business is similar to the used car business. A larger display attracts more customers than a smaller display because of the fact that the selection is better.

The success of the Christmas tree business, like most others, requires sufficient capital, good management, long hours, and hard work. Scheduling help, close supervision of personnel, wooing the public with aggressive merchandising techniques, and enjoying cold, rainy weather is all there is to it.

The amount of money you make is largely dependent on your location, the quality of your inventory and your ability to merchandise it attractively.

## PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE AND SELECTION OF SUPPLIER

Most of the successful Christmas tree retailers can attribute a large degree of their success to a knowledgeable supplier.

A good, knowledgeable supplier is like a steam roller. You can follow his directional lead with relative ease, after he has smoothed your otherwise rough road of inexperience.

Your Christmas tree order will include the proper quantity of each size and variety of tree. His experience obtained from years of detailed records will enable him to advise you as to what percentage of your Christmas trees you will sell throughout the season.

To minimize your capital investment he can assist you in inventory rotation, whereby your money turnover works to your greatest advantage.

Grading and pricing of Christmas trees, record keeping, advantages of flocked trees and sales of related items are additional means of increasing your profit. Fill-in orders of the many items you sell and use can be promptly made

available to you.

The above advantages can be enjoyed when you prudently favor one good supplier with the majority of your inventory purchases. It is a proven fallacy to believe that you will increase your profit by purchasing each individual item from a different supplier because of a slight price difference. By so doing, you can cut off the "helping hand".

## CHRISTMAS TREE SALES LOCATIONS

Your primary concern when selecting your sales location should be:

Can you obtain a city business license to conduct your Christmas tree business at that sight?

Second, is that property available for lease?



If you have received a "yes" answer to both questions, proceed to evaluate the property regarding the following:

**SIZE OF SALES LOCATION** - The actual sales area of your lot will be determined by the number of trees you plan to display and sell. On an "average" you will need room to display one sixth of the total trees you plan to sell. Each tree display spot will sell an "average" of six trees.

Allow for adequate aisles and tree display area, you should allow 25 to 30 square feet of area for each tree you plan to display. Example: 300 trees would require a 7,500 to 9,000 square foot of area, not including parking or a tree storage area.

It is advantageous to have the distance across the front of the lot wide, or wider than the depth.

The size of your sales area will be influenced by whether you are going to display and sell flocked Christmas trees. A flocked tree display area should be a minimum of 20 feet by 20 feet.

**PHYSICAL PROPERTIES** - The lot should be on the same grade as or level with the city sidewalk. Slightly higher would be more desirable than lower.

The property should be level or sloped gently, with a hard or firm surface and good drainage. Electricity and

water should be available.

It should not be encumbered by objects, structures or signs which may hinder an attractive display of Christmas trees.

**EXPOSURE AND PARKING** - A potential customer needs be able to see your Christmas tree display from a reasonable distance in order to decide to stop and buy. A good Christmas tree retail location should be situated on a main heavy traffic thoroughfare with maximum auto speed of 35 miles per hour. It should be clearly visible from at least two directions.

The total on and off street customer parking area required should accommodate a minimum of six cars for every 1000 trees you plan to sell during the season.

The off street parking entrance should be clearly posted with sign. Adjoining parking owned by neighboring businesses which are closed evenings and weekends, such as a bank, is very advantages.

Your sales location should not be located near a heavily congested intersection. Also, try to avoid areas which are saturated with "busy" flashing signs. They distract the motorist's vision from your display.

**LOCATION EVALUATION** – After you have located one or more suitable sites, study them thoroughly. Observe the traffic flow past these locations. Make test runs. Approach the sites from different directions.

The paramount factor when selecting the best potential location is selecting the correct side of the street. The correct side of the street is the side which shoppers travel when returning home after shopping at a major shopping center. They will not consider shopping for hours with a tree affixed to the exterior of their car. If you are on the side of the street which they travel when going to a shopping center, you will not enjoy their patronage. They will not cross opposing traffic to reach your sales location when on their way home from shopping.

## LEASE OF RETAIL SALES LOCATION

Now that you have decided to retail Christmas trees, your next step is to secure a lease on the desired property.

Locate the landlord and negotiate a lease which is mutually favorable. The monetary consideration offered to the landlord for the lease of his property should reflect a realistic estimate of the sales potential. At the time of this writing, a dollar a tree is normally considered fair and equitable rent.

Information included in the lease should be:

1. The exact dimensions of the parcel of property which you are leasing.
2. Specify the use for which you intend to use the property.
3. Specify the period of time which you will need to

occupy the property. Include the time it will require to set up and dismantle your sales location. This is usually from November 15 through December 31.

4. Specify the amount and type of construction you anticipate, fencing, lighting, signs, and/or flock tree shelter, etc.
5. Specify the amount of money agreed upon for the lease, including a clean up deposit, if required, and when and how it is to be paid. Your lease should be a fixed, flat rent for the time required.

Do not allow trucks delivering trees to block public traffic, especially if you are occupying part of the parking lot of a shopping center. Keep the area clean and orderly at all times.

Be a good sport and remove any unsold trees before Christmas day. Clean up your mess by then if you sell out early or as soon afterwards as possible.

If you should locate a very desirable piece of property which would be excellent for the sale of Christmas trees and learn that the landlord will not consider leasing it to you, an independent merchant, don't discount the fact that he may make it available to a non-profit group free of charge. In this case you should affiliate yourself with a local non-profit organization. They will obtain a rent free lease and the city business license in exchange for a donation from you to their organization. You will carry the necessary insurance to protect them from any problems that might occur.

The donation should be representative of the rental value of the property. They should agree to a sign being posted which states that their organization is benefiting from the sale of your Christmas trees. They should also enter into an agreement with you whereby you act as an independent contractor who will operate the Christmas tree sales location. You will furnish all material, inventory, and personnel. Any other pertinent details will be worked out between both parties.

Non-profit organizations are not the only ones who can enjoy a rent free lease on property for retailing Christmas trees. Under the proper circumstances and with the right landlord, an independent tree merchant can also enjoy a rent free property lease.

## BUYING CHRISTMAS TREES

Now that you have secured your sales location your next concern should be the source and selection of your Christmas trees.

The area of the country in which you plan to sell your trees should strongly influence the selection of the varieties of Christmas trees you plan to sell.

To determine the selection of these varieties, three primary factors should prevail:

First, what variety or style of tree does the public in

that area want and purchase?

Second, what varieties will be compatible with the climate in that area?

Third, can you be competitive with the locally grown trees if you plan to ship trees in from another part of the country?

Don't try introducing a strange new tree to an area just because you like it.



**QUALITY  
DOESN'T  
COST...**

**IT PAYS.**

Your best bet is to contact local Christmas tree wholesalers or growers associations. Take advantage of their knowledge and experience. Contact these suppliers and obtain the following information from them:

1. What varieties of Christmas trees do they have for sale?
2. What sizes are available in each variety?
3. What grades of trees do they have available?
4. What is the price per tree or per foot for the various species and sizes?
5. What related items do they have for sale?
6. What are the terms and conditions of the sale? What percent of the order is the deposit? When is it due? When is the balance due?
7. Obtain names and phone numbers of customers they sold to last season. Contact no less than three of their customers, especially the ones that are local. If your sales location is going to be 5 to 10 miles away from theirs, they will not consider you a competitor.

When you have been assured that a particular wholesaler will be interested in your success and is a fair person to deal with, call him and arrange a meeting.



Don't be intimidated because of your lack of experience. Demand and receive complete, non evasive, answers to all your pertinent questions.

Your local supplier will evaluate your Christmas tree order so that it reflects the potential desire of the customers in that area. Their preference should suggest:

1. What is the per capita income of the area?
2. What type of residences exist – single family, apartment, house or mobile home?
3. Are the residents predominantly single, married or married with children?

Some of the nation's finest quality cultured and/or sheared plantation trees are grown in the Pacific Northwest. These plantations are favored by Oregon's rich, fertile, loamy soil.

The following four varieties of Northwest trees are listed by popularity:

#### **CULTURED PLANTATION GROWN NOBLE FIR:**

1. Noble fir is the "Cadillac" of the Christmas tree family.
2. It has a very attractive dark, lush, green color.
3. It has a strong open limb structure.
4. It flocks and decorates very well.
5. It retains its needles longer than most other varieties of fir trees.

#### **SHEARED PLANTATION GROWN DOUGLAS FIR:**

1. This is the most popular of the medium priced trees.
2. It is a full, dense, and very symmetrical tree.
3. It is an ideal tree for flocking.
4. It has the pleasant fragrant Douglas fir scent.
5. This tree requires less decorating to be attractive.

#### **SHEARED PLANTATION GROWN SCOTCH PINE:**

1. Scotch is the most popular pine and is medium priced.
2. Pines retain their needles better than most fir trees.
3. Scotch pine have a longer needle than fir trees.
4. It is full, dense and very symmetrical.
5. It is a very good tree for flocking.

#### **SHEARED PLANTATION GROWN GRAND FIR:**

1. The Grand Fir is the second highest priced tree and is gaining popularity.
2. Its needle structure is more flat. It is dark, rich green on the top side and light green on the under side.
3. It holds its needles very well.
4. It is extremely attractive when flocked.
5. It has a pungent evergreen fragrance.

#### **TABLETOPS:**

Tabletop trees are young and/or short trees of 2 to 4 feet in height. The Noble and Scotch Pine are the most

popular plantation grown tabletop trees. The tabletop tree is desired as the family's second tree—usually for a child's room. Single people and apartment dwellers also favor the tabletop tree. It fits all budgets. Five to 10% of your Christmas tree sales will be comprised of tabletop trees.

A knowledgeable supplier, who carries all the above mentioned varieties, will recommend that your inventory include at least two of these more popular varieties, plus tabletops.

All other varieties of Christmas trees not mentioned are much less popular. Their sales are proportionate.

## **CHRISTMAS TREE PURCHASE CONTRACT**

Names, addresses and phone numbers of all buyers and sellers should be specified in the agreement.

Specify the exact quantity of each variety of Christmas tree including the grade, size and price.

Under terms and conditions in your agreement, be sure to specify when and how all monies are payable. The deposit for trees is normally 25% of the total purchase. The deposit should be paid at the time that your purchase agreement is signed by all parties.

Be certain that the contract clearly states how and when the balance of the money is payable. Is it to be paid by personal check, cashier's check, or cash?

In relation to delivery: Spell out in detail where your sales lot is located. If necessary furnish a map, with phone number if available. Specify the terms and payment of the freight. Have a complete understanding of whether the trees are shipping F.O.B. the plantation or F.O.B. your sales location.

If they are shipping F.O.B. your sales location, the shipper is responsible for their safe delivery.

If they are shipping F.O.B. the point of origin, you are responsible. Title to the trees passes to you when they are loaded. Be sure you are properly covered by insurance. The point of origin could be the wholesaler's distribution yard or the plantation where they were grown.

Also, who is responsible for the payment of the freight? Is it included in the price of the trees or is it additional?

If there is to be more than one delivery of the original contract, specify all terms of delivery and payment of trees for each delivery.

Christmas tree purchase agreements should include provisions whereby the buyer will be reimbursed all monies paid in the event delivery of trees cannot be made because of an Act of God.

Staggered deliveries for your tree order will assure you fresher trees throughout the season. Fresher trees towards the end of the season could result in you selling more trees

## LIABILITY OF CHRISTMAS TREE RETAILERS

The best way to insulate your self from litigation because of liability is with the proper insurance, safe work and business practices, and diligent personnel.

Your liability starts with being certain you are occupying the property specified in your lease. Your liability ends only after you vacate the property, having removed all debris, and having filled the last post hole.



It is your responsibility to provide protection for your landlord, the public who visit your business location, your business associates and your employees, including their personal property. The state makes it mandatory that you carry workman's compensation insurance for the protection of your employees.

Your liability is not limited to a fenced area regarded as your sales location. It can include areas such as city sidewalks, curbs, and the street, and as a result of any activities which include neglect, fault or omission. You are required to comply with all laws, statutes, rules, ordinances and regulations initiated by municipal, county, state, and federal agencies.

Your landlord may specify that he be named as co-insured in your insurance coverage.

Prior to your business commencement, it is not uncommon for both the city and your landlord to demand receipt of a certificate of your insurance.

If you are operating an existing business, it is very possible that your Christmas tree business can be covered by that insurance.

Should a partnership exist in your Christmas tree business, you are responsible for all the actions and debts incurred by your partner.

## BUSINESS LICENSE FOR RETAILING CHRISTMAS TREES

A business license is required by any one intending to retail Christmas trees. This normally does not apply to retailers already established in business, especially nurseries and garden centers.

You will need to go to City Hall to obtain a business

license.

Some cities try to maintain a standard of city beauty, which may restrict the use of large and/or numerous signs, banners, pennants and/or flashing lights.

The water department will want a deposit on the water meter before it can be installed, should you need one.

Unless water is available from a neighboring property or an existing water supply, you will need water to keep the Fire Inspector happy. No smoking signs will have to be posted. A fire extinguisher will also be required for your office or shelter.

The State's Fire Marshall's office in California and other states will be concerned about your permit to apply flame retardant to the Christmas trees which are to be displayed in public buildings.

In preparation for a possible meeting with planning commission, the city manager may request a plot plan of your Christmas tree sales location.

The information desired is:

1. What size is your location going to be?
2. How many signs do you plan to display?
3. What size will these signs be?
4. What is the sign copy of each sign or banner?
5. Where on your lot will these signs be displayed?
6. Show the location and size of the area for off street parking for customers and employees.
7. Do you have the necessary insurance?
8. He will possibly desire a copy of your signed lease.

The building inspector will only be concerned with your operation if you are going to construct a shelter for flocked trees.

The electrical inspector is going to be concerned about the source of electricity. He will request information as to the number and size of light bulbs you plan to use. Also the type and size of electric appliances and motors you plan to operate. Does your electrical source have sufficient amperage to handle the electrical load? He will insist on "ground fault" outlets for motors and appliances.

Once you have a business license, nothing is guaranteed. More than one business license has been revoked because a retailer persisted to play loud music which was disturbing to neighboring businesses or residents.

And last but not least – be gracious if one of the city's officials suggests that you donate a Christmas tree to be displayed in one of the municipal buildings.

## CHRISTMAS TREE ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Because of the lead time necessary for planning, composition, and printing of advertising and promotional material to sell Christmas trees, this chapter becomes

somewhat urgent.

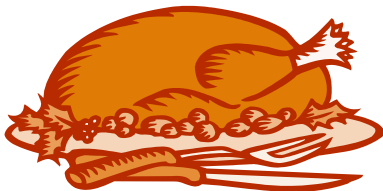
At this moment, without actually planning to increase your order for Christmas trees, you should adjust your thinking to develop a sales volume which will be double that of your purchases.



Now you are ready to formulate ideas that will contribute to a successful advertising and promotional campaign. Let these ideas be strongly influenced by the fact that 80% of your customers will live within a five mile radius of your sales location. Good business suggests that you should use the type of advertising which produces the greatest results for the least cost.

1. Direct mail
2. Incentive buying
3. Point of sale
4. Media advertising
5. Merchant cooperation and/or participation

More than one of these should be used in your advertising program. Direct mail advertising is very effective when used with an acquired mailing list. This list is obtained by having previous years' customers sign a directory giving their name, address and phone number. Sometimes an incentive is required to persuade customers to sign the directory. It can be something as inexpensive as a turkey for Christmas dinner. The turkey is given away by means of a drawing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> of December.



### **Win A Christmas Turkey**

In this case, the customer's name is on the ticket which they deposit in the box for the drawing. A direct mail list for first year retailers can be obtained from a reverse phone directory. Mail Christmas cards that advise the recipient of your daily business hours, the varieties of Christmas trees you will have available, special services, flocking, flame retarding, delivery service, etc., related items for sale.

Incentive buying could embrace several methods. The most effective is to engage one or more non-profit groups, including churches, in a fund raising program. Furnish these groups with coupons to sell which entitle the bearer to a discount on the tree of his/her choice, which will be purchased from your sales location. The non-profit group retains the money they receive from the sale of the coupons. An alternate method is to distribute the discount coupons, free of charge, throughout the neighborhood. Distribution or sale of the coupons should take place around Thanksgiving.

The coupons should have the following features:

1. They should resemble real currency in size, color and design.
2. They should have the name and address of your location, possibly even a map.
3. They should list the variety of trees you will be selling.
4. They will advise customers of the amenities you offer, such as free parking, the hours you are open, etc.
5. They will specify the services you offer, tree flocking, flame retarding, etc.
6. Related items you offer for sale.
7. Specify a expiration date on the coupon.

Point of Sale advertising is comprised of attractive signs and banners advertising the variety of trees you offer, the freshness of your trees, attractive prices, flocking and flame retarding services, off street parking, etc. Some of these signs and banners will be large and attractive so they can be easily read by passing traffic. Others will be small and posted throughout your retail location, especially inside the main entrance and near the cash register.

Point of sale advertising includes a display of related items which you offer for sale. These related items could include water reservoir tree stands, tree preservative, wreaths, garland, door swags and/or mistletoe. Tree removal bags, decorative door or window hangers, pine cones and decorations are proven profit builders.

Media advertising can be effective and advantageous, but you must be selective when using media advertising. You will need to decide if media advertising will work for you and which type to use.

Your total advertising and promotional expenditures should not be less than 5% or more than 10% of your total gross sales. If you only have a single location keep in mind that your advertising will only attract customers who live within a five to six mile radius of your location.



## MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

Although various individuals will be hired to perform specific duties on the Christmas tree lot all personnel will work at all times to accomplish the work which proves to be the priority at the moment.

The construction of the Christmas tree sales location is usually primary. Because there is a continued need for persons with construction experience through out the season, this type of experience should be favored when selecting personnel to fill various positions available.

These various positions are in relation to importance:

1. Manager
2. Assistant manager
3. Cashier
4. Specialized labor
5. Sales Personnel/Customer Service
6. Casual Labor

Depending on the size of your retail operation, some of the personnel may wear more than one hat.

Normally the bulk of the necessary work is done

during the daylight hours, while the manager is present.

The cashier should be an experienced, personable, trustworthy person, capable of operating a cash register and making change quickly and accurately. A cashier must have the mathematical ability to rapidly compute the total of Christmas tree sale, related items and sales tax. They must be able to audit Christmas tree sales tags for accuracy. The cashier should be familiar enough with the inventory to answer customer questions.

Keep a minimal amount of cash in the cash register, especially at night. The cashier should never leave the cash register without proper relief.

Decide in advance if you are going to accept checks. If you do accept checks, guard against bad checks by requesting proper identification from the “maker”. The driver’s license/ID card must be valid. Checks should be imprinted with the customer’s name and address. Ask for a phone number if it is not printed on the check. The check must be made out in the presence of the cashier.



Sales personnel and customer service should perform their duties in the following order of importance:

1. Assist customers – sell trees and related items.
2. Install stands on trees which have been sold, when necessary.
3. Assist customers with the loading of their tree.
4. Stock the Christmas tree display area with inventory.
5. Perform construction and/or maintenance within their capabilities.

## CONSTRUCTION OF RETAIL SALES LOCATION

The installation and/or construction of your retail sales location is the first visible sign that you are going to conduct Christmas tree sales at this location. It is also the first opportunity to observe your personnel in action.

The sales location construction work goes as follows:

1. Layout primary and secondary measurements or boundaries for fences and the flocked tree shelter.
2. Remove all undesirable weeds and debris.
3. Establish the location for posts required for fencing, gates, electrical lights, flocked tree shelter, tree display, signs and power pole, if needed.
4. Dig all post holes.
5. Select and set posts as required.
6. Install signs identifying your sales location.



7. Install primary fencing and gates.
8. Construct the flocked tree shelter.
9. Install racks or devices for displaying the trees.
10. Install electrical light strings and outlets.
11. Install water supply lines as required.
12. Install wood shavings for ground cover.
13. Install secondary posts and fencing.
14. Install secondary signs.

## BOOKKEEPING

Bookkeeping is a daily tabulation of credits and debits, the money being received and the money being spent. The information reflected by an accurate set of books is the difference between profit and loss.



The information in a properly kept set of books on the DEBIT side consists of the following:

1. Costs of Christmas trees.
2. Cost of labor.
3. Sales tax payable.
4. Cost of legal fees, licenses, and permits.
5. The amount of deposits refunded.
6. Costs of overhead including:
  - A. Rent
  - B. Insurance
  - C. Freight
  - D. Utilities
  - E. Tags
  - F. Miscellaneous

The information needed on the CREDIT side is:

1. The amount of the Christmas tree sales.
2. The amount of the snow flocking sales.
3. The amount of the flame retarding sales.
4. The amount of the related merchandise sales.
5. The money received for delivery service.
6. Refundable deposits.

The most valuable information you can obtain from a well-kept, up-to-date set of books is when does your income exceed your expenses? If you can have this information available within 24 hours of the time that it happens you are in a very good position. You can make an informed decision on the manner and price you want to

use to dispose of remaining inventory. A knowledgeable supplier can be helpful in determining the remaining sales potential of your retail operation. This information, in comparison to your inventory, will enable you to make proper decisions which will influence your profit. The long range value of book and recordkeeping is to learn about the daily business transactions.

## RECORDKEEPING

Included are samples of three forms that will be useful for you to keep an efficient set of records. Use these to develop forms that will give you the information you want to track. Make copies of the forms for daily use.

The first sample is the "Daily Job Report". It should be used to keep a running daily record of all expenses, from the construction of your lot, to daily expenses during the sales period, through the dismantling of your sales operation at the end of the season.

The second recordkeeping sample, "Christmas Tree Tally Sheet", is used to record the receipt of your Christmas trees and related items. Develop a form that will work for the trees and other items you have ordered. Make ample copies of this form.

When you measure and tag the individual trees, the pertinent information should be recorded on some type of "Itemized Tree Inventory Sheet", see the third sample form.

The information on these forms should be recapped daily to give you an idea of which trees are selling, your current inventory, and your labor expenses.



an important and very serious one. Your Christmas tree order represents a sizable amount of money. For this reason, the trees should be unloaded with care and accuracy.

The personnel needed to unload the truck should be no less than five strong, capable people. This does not include your tally person or the truck driver.

If tally people are not available the trees should be unloaded in an open area where there will be room to stack the trees by size and variety in piles of ten trees, with the butts all facing one direction. Stockpiling in this manner makes it easy to obtain a quick and accurate count of the trees once unloaded.

Most plantation grown trees have identification tags on them. These tags are usually quite visible. The tags are color coded to indicate the size of the tree. The tags are also printed with the variety and size clearly visible. The person or persons unloading the trees should call out to the tally people the color of the tag on each individual tree as it is being unloaded. Tally accuracy suggests that no one talk to the tally person about anything other than the trees being unloaded.

If the identification tag is missing on a tree, set it aside until the unloading is finished. Then these trees can be measured and stockpiled according to size and variety.

Remember, if you do not have tally people, stockpile ten trees per pile, butts all one way and keep varieties separate.

Because the trucker's time will not allow for it and because the trees are baled, the inspection of the trees should take place when they are being tagged and priced, or displayed.

Plan ahead – be prepared – and your season will have a good start, which will contribute greatly to your success.

## **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PRE-PRICING TREES**

Keeping in mind that there is more than one way to do any job, you will need to decide whether it is more profitable for you to pre-price your trees or not.

Pre-pricing means marking the price of each individual tree on a sales tag when that tree is put on display. This requires an experienced person, such as the owner or manager, because the quality dictates the price.

### **ADVANTAGES OF PRE-PRICING YOUR TREES**

1. The customer and sales personnel know the cost of each tree.
2. It is quicker and easier for the cashier.
3. The pricing system is considered more fair for the customer.
4. Pre-pricing is advantageous if you are operating a self-serve lot.

5. You have the opportunity to obtain more money for premium trees.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF PRE-PRICING YOUR TREES**

1. A premium tree, prominently displayed, could scare customers away, because they could think all trees are similarly priced.
2. All trees must be unbaled before grading and pricing.
3. Owner/manager must be present to grade and price trees.
4. Budget conscious customers are less apt to shop for quality.
5. If tags are removed, lost or fall off the tree the owner/manager must re-price that tree.
6. Price changing late in the season is more work.

Retail sales lots who do not pre-price their trees usually use a tag which advises the customer and the sales personnel as to the height and variety of each tree. Signs advising customers of the price of each species of tree by the foot are usually posted in several locations throughout the sales area, including the cash register counter. Your sales personnel are furnished with a price per foot multiplication table to enable them to quote prices quickly and accurately. These multiplication tables are posted throughout the display area.

### **ADVANTAGES IN NOT PRE-PRICING YOUR TREES**

1. Customers are more inclined to shop quality rather than price.
2. Trees do not have to be unbaled before tagging.
3. Customer's taste and choice in trees they desire enable you to sell lower grade trees for the same money as better grade trees.
4. You can pre-price premium grade trees for more money if you elect to do so.
5. Trees are easier to tag because only a measurement is required.
6. Price changing can be done less expensively.
7. The extra time required by the cashier to finalize the sale can be used by the sales person to sell the customer related items.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF NOT PRE-PRICING YOUR TREES**

1. Customers usually require more help from sales personnel.
2. It requires more time at the cash register to complete the transaction.
3. Retailers are less inclined to pre-price premium trees.
4. It requires time and money to make up the multiplication table for pricing.

## **PROFIT MARGIN FOR CHRISTMAS**

## TREES

In order to afford yourself a sufficient margin of profit, you must know and consider your overhead costs and related expenses. Related expenses include profit not realized because of damaged or unsold trees.

In figuring your profit margin you must be familiar with the financial climate in your particular area. Each retailer has to determine for himself whether he is going to realize a profit from selling fewer trees at a higher price, or from selling more trees at a lower price. Regardless of which plan you, choose you will be more successful if your sales location is properly advertised, professionally merchandised and well staffed.

It may also be wise to consider the fact that 10% is the national average for unsold trees at the end of the season.

## MEASURING & TAGGING CHRISTMAS TREES

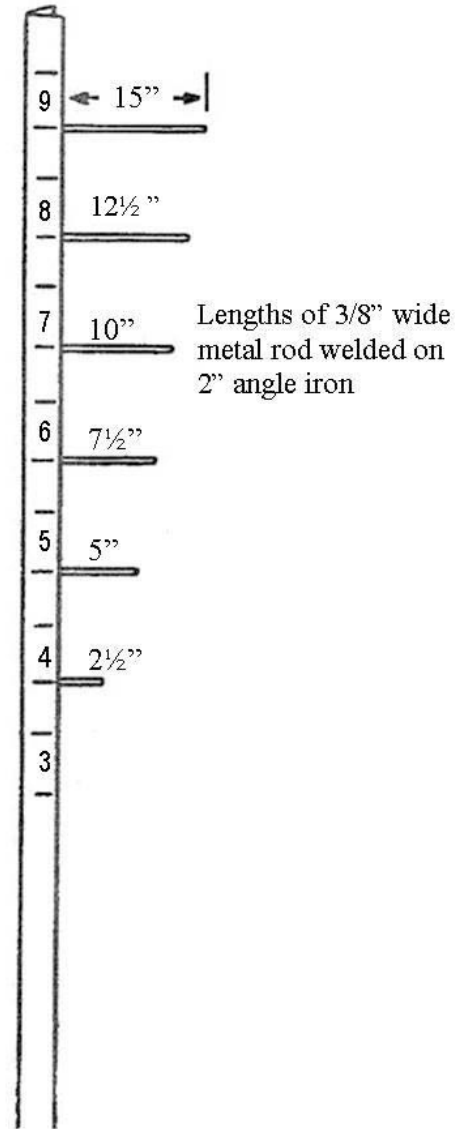
There are three parts or sections to a Christmas tree: the butt or handle, the body, and the tip or leader. The butt or handle is the lower most section of the tree which extends from the bottom of the butt upward to the first or lowest complete whorl of limbs. The tip or leader is that section which extends upward from the top whorl of limbs to the tip.

The most acceptable method for measuring the height of a Christmas tree is to measure from the bottom of the handle to the place on the leader which is contacted by the limbs of an acceptably trimmed top whorl when they are folded upward against the leader.

Most trees are delivered with a "Plantation" tag secured to the tree. This color coded tag indicates the size of the tree. The tag also specifies the size and variety of the tree in print.

Regardless of whether you have decided to pre-price your trees or not, you should use a tag which enables you to specify the size and variety of each tree. This will provide valuable information for your records.

In order to accurately measure a tree, a measuring pole should be used. Each one foot graduated measurement should have the numbered sizes printed on the pole. The measuring pole will be more accurate and efficient if a heavy metal wire or rod extends out beyond one side of the pole at each one foot increment.



When a measuring pole does not have rods the person measuring the tree tends to lean the tree towards the pole. This causes the height measurement to be reduced by as much as four inches. If a tree is stood straight next to a pole without the aid of the extensions on the pole, there is a chance for error on the part of the person measuring the tree, because they are "guessing" on the actual tree height.

One person should hold the tree next to the pole, while the person measuring the tree should stand at least 8 to 10 feet from the tree to get the correct measurement. If they stand closer they will "measure" the tall trees taller than they actually are, because their line of vision is at an upward angle.

## TREE TAGS

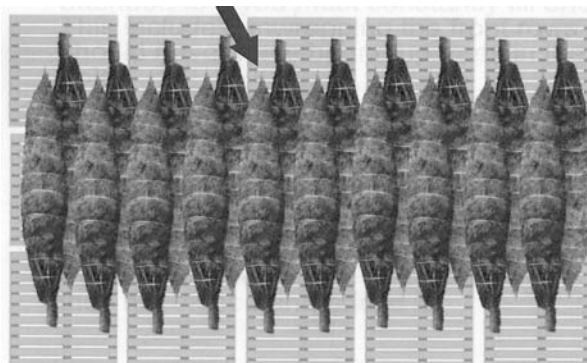
Christmas tree tags are available in weatherproof cardstock, Tyvek, and plastic, and they are consecutively numbered. Tags come in a generic form, or you can choose to have your tags customized.

A customized tag will usually furnish the following information:

1. The name of your Christmas tree lot.
2. The variety and size of each tree.
3. The price of the tree.
4. The price of the flocking, if the tree is flocked.
5. The price of the stand, if a stand is installed.
6. The amount of the sales tax, if applicable.
7. The grand total of all charges.
8. The top have of the tag has a point of sales message.
9. The lower half of the tag detaches and furnishes necessary information for your bookkeeping.

so that they all run the same direction. They should completely cover the ground in the stockpile area. Place the stockpile of trees on this wood fabricated surface.

Whether on covered ground or on pallets, trees should be stacked in continuous layers, the tree butts should be placed so that they point outward on either side of the pile, start at one end and reverse the direction of the butt of every other tree, the tips of the trees should be at least 24" inside the stacking to prevent damage to the tops, the tree butts should be kept as even as possible on both sides of the pile.



Cover the stockpiled trees with shade cloth to protect them from sun and wind burn. Water the trees daily, early in the morning or late in the evening.

## DISPLAY OF CHRISTMAS TREES

Display is the ability to create customer interest in an item or a place of business at a moment's glance. Observers become shoppers. Shoppers become buyers.

The first items of "display" advertising that should be put up are large, legible signs. These signs should let passing traffic know the availability of your Fresh Quality Christmas Trees and the services you offer, such as flocking, flame retarding, etc. Post your opening date as far in advance as possible. This will ensure you increased early sales.

A large display of both white and colored flocked trees will stop the most traffic. It will add a touch of professionalism to your sales location.

An attractive display of green trees is one where all of the trees stand in a straight, orderly fashion. The green Christmas tree display should be arranged in a systematic manner. The shortest trees should be in the front row. The trees in the rear rows should be the taller trees. The trees should increase in height from front to back. The trees should be separated into the different varieties and each variety should have its own section, separated by aisles.

To induce traffic into your sales location, it is essential that all trees remain in a straight, upright position, even during windy, rainy weather.

In fair weather, some of your flocked trees should be

## STORAGE AREA AND STOCKPILING TREES

The manner in which you protect your trees in the storage area will depend on two factors:

1. What are the temperatures and weather conditions?
2. What type of surface will the trees be stored on?

Extremely warm, sunny weather may require the trees be stored in a refrigerated area. Extremely cold areas may require a temperature controlled storage to prevent freezing. Pine trees can tolerate freezing conditions better than fir. Freezing causes fir trees to lose their needles.

The ground needs to be covered to prevent needle loss due to surface heat radiation from the ground.

One way to cover the ground is with wood chips. The wood chips should be about one and one half inches thick and spread uniformly over the storage area.

Another way to protect the trees in the storage area from surface heat radiation is to cover the storage area with a single layer of pallets. The pallets should be placed

stood outside of the fence, in front of your sales location. This is especially beneficial if your flocked tree display shelter is small.

The display area should always be a main concern. Extensive surveys indicate that over 50% of Christmas tree shoppers purchase their tree from the first location they stop at. The choice of location for their first stop was decided days before they left to go shop. They have noticed the available Christmas tree locations while running errands in the neighborhood. For this reason, maximum lighting is a must. People feel more comfortable shopping in a well lit area.

A well lit sales area has several advantages:

1. The passing traffic is influenced by your well lit signs.
2. The light creates a cheerful atmosphere.
3. The shadows created by the limbs of the trees on display make the trees look fuller.
4. Trees which are less bushy sell better at night.

The entrance to your sales location should be marked with a well illuminated sign. All lights should be turned on about the time the sun sets. On cloudy, gloomy days the perimeter lights should be on all day if necessary.

It is suggested that all 4 x 4 wood posts used for fencing, light wire support and the flocked tree shelter construction be painted, alternating red and white is most attractive.

Your location can be made more attractive by the using the following:

1. Multi colored strings of pennants displayed around the outer perimeter of the sales location.
2. A large Christmas tree displayed in the front of the sales location, decorated with outdoor ornaments and tree lights.
3. Light flashers installed in the flood lights illuminating the signs and/or exterior tree lights outlining the entrance.

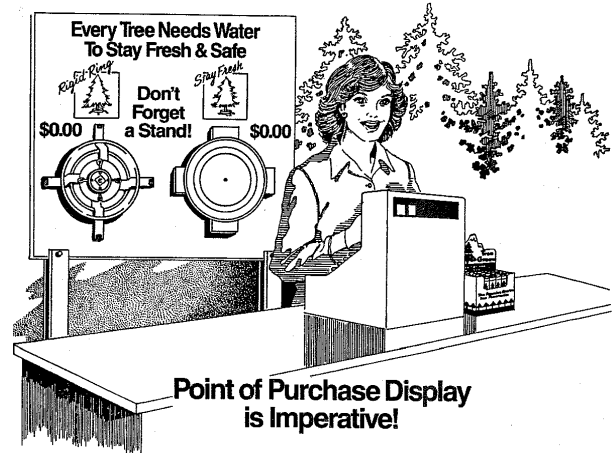
## MERCHANDISING CHRISTMAS TREES

Merchandising Christmas trees is making buyers out of shoppers. In the retail business this is accomplished by skillfully exposing the shopper to your most expensive merchandise first. If you have a flocked tree display the consumer traffic should enter your sales location through the flocked tree display shelter. This means your flocked tree area should be in the front of the lot.

Arrange the entrance to the green tree display area in a location so that the traffic flow has passed through at least 50% of your flocked tree display. In the green tree display area, arrange your highest quality trees in the areas that consumers will pass through first. "Bury" your more popular, less expensive trees in the rear or far side of your sales lot. The consumer will find them, because a good

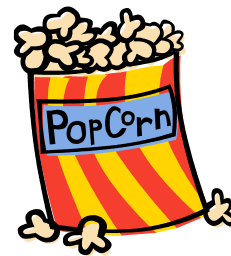
merchandiser has each section of each variety of trees clearly marked so they can be easily located. Signs showing the various varieties of trees available in the green tree area should be displayed in the flocked tree shelter.

The flocked tree shelter gives you an excellent place to display and merchandise wreaths, greenery, tree preservatives, water reservoir stands, tree removal bags, etc. Many of these sales items can be displayed on your cash register counter or on a table near it. Do not skimp on the table display area. There should even be room for a popcorn popper, if you choose to have one.



Earlier it was mentioned that customers had predetermined where they were going to shop first for the family Christmas tree. If your sales location displays a sign advertising "FREE POPCORN" the children have initiated the necessary influence on their family to direct them to your tree lot. Experience has taught us the advantages of popcorn:

1. It has no age limit, everyone loves popcorn.
2. It only costs a few cents per serving.
3. There is nothing more tantalizing than the smell of freshly popped popcorn.
4. Popcorn is not sticky like candy or spillable like drinks.



Offer popcorn or other free goodies to the entire family

immediately after entering your location. By doing so you have intimidated the parents, they feel obligated because you gave their family something for free. For a few pennies you have greatly improved your chance of selling that family their tree.

DO NOT give away your sales merchandise. Some retailers decide to give away mistletoe, because they can obtain it readily at little cost. When you give away merchandise that you normally sell you are reducing its value or importance in the eyes of the recipient.

Good merchandising suggests that you expose your prospective customers to the finest quality merchandise you own. Should a tree of lesser quality get put on display early in the season, remove it to the storage area. Later in the season this tree will sell more readily for a good price, because by comparison it is a better looking tree. If it is left on display early in the season it will detract from the quality image you should try to maintain.

## SELLING CHRISTMAS TREES

Your sales personnel should be mindful of the fact that they will actually “SELL” very few people Christmas trees. Customers – people – have individual tastes. Their personal selection requires very little help. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

We know that about one half of the people shopping for a Christmas tree purchase it from the first location they visit. We are assuming that the reason you will have sold the 50% who did buy from you is because most things were right. Your advertising, merchandising, display, prices, and quality of trees are equal or better than your competition.

Let us concern ourselves with the other half that buy elsewhere. Why don't they buy from you? Here are some thoughts as to why and what can be done about it. There is a percentage of people who would never think of buying a Christmas tree, clothing, a car, etc. from the first place of business they visit. In another group is the family that makes an all day outing of buying a Christmas tree, especially if the weather is nice. Your hope of selling this type of shopper a tree is to give them a reason to return to your location and make the purchase after visiting other retailers. To do this you need to create a lasting and favorable impression. This can be done with polite, cheerful, sincere assistance while they are shopping at your location during their first visit.

Some families will shop at several retail locations in an effort to find a tree which pleases every member of the family. As long as they think there is hope of accomplishing this they will continue to shop. By use of persuasive, ingenious salesmanship you can succeed in getting the minority to agree to accept the tree selected by the majority.

There are a few people who hate to make decisions.

They will visit one retailer after another until some alert salesperson makes a decision for them based on the questions that were asked. Ask questions and use the answers to your advantage. You must gently and politely persuade this person to decide on a tree which fits their needs.

These are a few of the reasons why shoppers do not become buyers. You can turn many of these shoppers into buyers if:

1. You are selective in your choice of sales personnel.
2. Your sales people have outgoing personalities which enable them to quickly develop a friendly rapport with strangers.
3. You properly train and supervise your salespeople.

There are many publications on general salesmanship available if you desire additional knowledge.

## SALESPERSON'S DUTIES – SELLING

1. When a new customer enters the sales location, wait on them. Leave any work in progress, other than helping an existing customer.
2. Meet the new customer who is entering with a cheerful smile and a friendly greeting.
3. If busy with another customer, acknowledge the presence of the new customer with a wave and a welcoming greeting. As soon as possible move to this customer and follow the instructions in the following paragraphs.
4. Acquaint the customer with the selection of Christmas trees. Favor the higher priced trees with complimentary remarks regarding their freshness, lush green color and other characteristics.
5. Advise the customer of the ecological advantages and the importance of plantation trees.
6. The sales presentation should begin by asking the customer questions which will stimulate their desire to participate in the conversation. The questions should be related to things which the customer enjoys talking about.
7. How high is the ceiling?
  - A. Where in the room will the tree stand this year?
  - B. How large of a tree are you considering?
  - C. What variety of tree do you favor?
  - D. What shape or type of tree do you prefer to decorate?
  - E. By obtaining the answers to these questions you can better help the customer with their selection. For example: If the tree is going in a corner you know that one side of the tree can have imperfections without affecting its appearance when decorated.
8. When the customer has indicated which size and type of tree they prefer, accompany them to that section and

help with their selection.

9. Proceed with the conversation by asking questions which require a “yes” answer, signifying agreement. Example:
  - A. Don’t you think we have exceptionally nice trees this year?
  - B. Doesn’t that Northwest rain make the trees nice and green?
  - C. Don’t you think these plantation trees look beautiful when decorated?
  - D. Don’t you love the smell of these freshly cut trees?A “yes” answer to these and other leading questions condition the customer to be agreeable when you attempt to close the sale. It also helps the customer sell themselves on your trees.
10. Try for a close or conclusion of the sale as soon as the customer shows any degree of interest in a particular tree. Example:
  - A. Do you like this tree?
  - B. Will this tree satisfy your needs?
  - C. Don’t you think this tree will look beautiful when decorated?
  - D. Can you visualize this tree decorated and surrounded by gifts?
  - E. Shall we load this tree in your car?
11. Don’t encourage prolonged shopping. It tends to confuse the customer. Confusion could cause the customer to shop elsewhere.
12. When prolonged shopping cannot be avoided and a newly arrived customer requires attention, excuse yourself momentarily and wait on the new customer. Check back with the first customer every few minutes, each time trying to conclude the sale.
13. Be sure that you can quickly and accurately quote the customer prices on the trees they are interested in.



Keep in mind that many shoppers like to be “sold” for

various reasons, like the following:

1. They are the center of attention
2. They appreciate help when making an infrequent purchase.
3. They enjoy the charm and persuasion of a good salesperson.

When the customer has made their selection, assist them by carrying the tree to the cash register. While doing so find out if they have a water reservoir stand. If they do not own one, proceed to sell them one by calling their attention to its value.

- A. It will keep the tree moist.
- B. The tree will maintain its beauty longer.
- C. It will last for years.

Should the customer decide to purchase a wooden stand, attempt to sell a nail on water bowl to accompany it for just a few dollars more. At the cash register complete the sales tag listing all of the chargeable items to be included in the sale.

Sales and/or service employees should place an appropriate size poly-tubing protective covering over a flocked tree before removing it from the sales location.

When the sales person returns, if he had to load the last tree sold, the next waiting customer should be assisted. If customers do not need assistance the display area should be restocked with a tree which is the same size and variety as the one that was just sold.

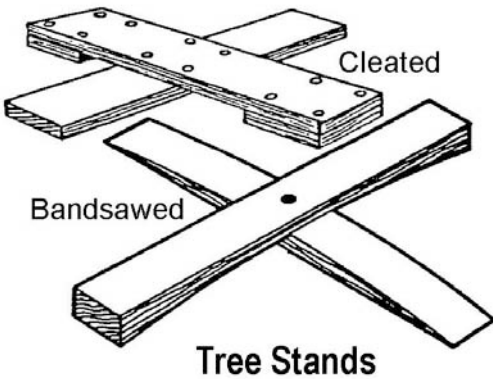
## WOODEN STAND INSTALLATION ON TREES

There are two popular, basic types of wooden stands which are installed on Christmas trees, the “Bandsawed” and the “Cleated”.

The bandsawed stand is less expensive because it requires less material and labor to manufacture. The bundles of bandsawed stands are more compact. They require a third less storage space than cleated stands. The disadvantage of the bandsawed stand is that it breaks more easily and is made with thinner material.

The cleated stand is stronger and sturdier. This is because of the larger cleat portion of the stand, and because it has more weight. The disadvantage of the cleated stand is when the nails securing the cleat to the stand are not properly crimped. The cleat vibrates loose from the stand because of the repeated impact of the hammer when the stand is being attached to the tree.





**Tree Stands**

Some retailers install wood stands on all trees that they display. If this is the case, a stand installation area needs to be set up in the tree storage area. If stands are to be installed only upon the request of a customer, the stand installation area should be located close to the cash register, because:

- A. It is advantageous because the tree being sold does not have to be moved too far to install the stand.
- B. During early or late hours of operation the same person may have to install the stand and collect the money.
- C. Customers and shoppers can be observed.
- D. During the hours that there is a dedicated cashier on duty the customer service person can easily communicate with the cashier.

If you are flocking trees, all trees to be flocked will need a stand. It may be easier to have a separate area to install stands on the trees to be flocked.

Your stand retailer will be able to assist you with the correct size of stand for the different tree heights and the proper quantity and size of nails.

## FLAME RETARDING

Flame retarding is becoming an increasingly important factor in retailing Christmas trees. There are new laws that increase the safety of the public when Christmas trees are displayed in public buildings or places of business. You will need to check with your local authorities regarding the laws which govern the display of trees in these situations in your area. You should properly advise your customers of these laws.

To comply with the laws which cover flame retarding Christmas trees and related greenery, you must use an approved flame retardant in a manner prescribed by the manufacturer. You must comply with the approved methods of application. Some states require you to obtain an application permit. Some counties and cities also require you to have another applicator's permit, in addition to the one required by the state. Check the

requirements in your local area.

The approved and recommended method for applying flame retardant is by either spraying or dipping. Dipping is practical only if you have a large number of trees to flame retard at one time. The average retailer uses the spray method.

There are three popular sprayers used for this purpose, the two or three gallon tank pump sprayer used for general gardening, the solo type backpack sprayer, or the airless variety of paint sprayer, depending on the brand of flame retardant you use.

Flame retardant tags will have to be affixed to the flame retarded tree. This tag must state the following information:

1. The chemical used.
2. The manufacturer's approved registration number.
3. The manner used to apply the flame retardant.
4. The applicator's permit number.
5. The signature of the applicator.
6. The date the flame retardant was applied.
7. A "DO NOT REMOVE" tag notice.
8. A statement of certification pertinent to flame retarding of the item.

Fortunately, there are pre-printed tags which simplify furnishing the above required data.



Flame retarded trees should not be exposed to the rain after they have been sprayed. Flocked tree poly tubing can be used to protect the tree during delivery in an open vehicle if it is raining.

## FLOCKED TREE SHELTERS

Various methods have been used to create a shelter for flocked Christmas trees in regions of moderate climate.

A permanent building of the necessary size, with adequate ceiling height, windows and doors is most desirable.

Two popular styles of temporary shelters are used.

Sizes will vary according to individual needs. A tent shelter is popular because it is put up and dismantled quickly. Polyethylene shelters, which are a wooden shed-like framework covered with polyethylene sheeting, are less expensive when their cost is prorated over several years.



The tree flocking booth should be approximately 10 feet square if it is outside the flocked tree display shelter. This will give you ample room to store your inventory of products needed and keep your flocking equipment dry in rainy weather.

The floor of the flocking booth and the flocked tree display are should be level and even. This is necessary for safe movement and standing of wet, flocked trees. Cover the floor with wood shavings. This area should be very well illuminated.

## FLOCKING EQUIPMENT

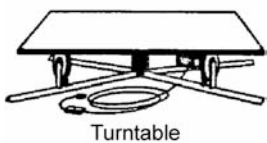
The basic equipment needed for flocking Christmas trees is:

1. A flocking machine.
2. A turntable.
3. A tree mover.

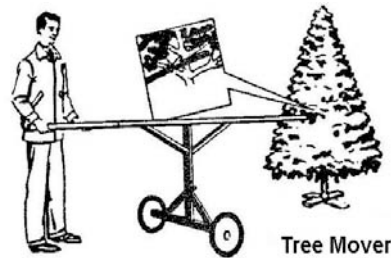
There are a variety of flocking machines available. Talk to your equipment supplier to determine which one would be best for you.

A turntable to place the tree on while flocking is required.

A tree mover is a must for retailers who flock trees. The labor saving advantages pay for the unit in a relatively short time.



Turntable



The beautiful appearance of a flocked tree is largely dependent on the quality of the material used. The ability of the applicator does influence the professional appearance, however it is much easier for an inexperienced applicator to create a product of beauty when high quality flocking material is used. A quality flocking material is properly formulated with dry adhesive and an approved flame retardant.

The desired performance and result of flocking material is as follows:

1. Efficient coverage
2. Brilliant whiteness
3. Strong adhesion
4. Fast drying

The materials used for flocking are:

1. Christmas tree flocking
2. Flock color
3. Flock glitter, or pearlescent flakes.

Christmas tree flock is available in white. White flock can be tinted with flock colors. Flock colorants can be mixed to create a variety of colors.

Glitter can be applied to flocked Christmas trees to create an attractive shimmer effect. Ultra fine glitter is available in a variety of colors. Pearlescent flakes when applied to a flocked tree make the tree shimmer and shine. The pearlescent flakes glisten like fresh snow.

## FLOCKING CHRISTMAS TREES

At this point it is important to understand the objectives in selling flocked trees.

1. To compete with the sales of flocked artificial trees.
2. To enjoy a sales advantage over your competition that does not flock trees.
3. To attract customers with a professional display of attractive flocked trees.
4. If your competition is flocking "real trees" you will suffer a loss of profit.

Successful "real tree" retailers continue to flock Christmas trees because of their increased sales. Fifteen to twenty percent of their sales are flocked trees.

Keep in mind that many people shop for a flocked Christmas tree, but buy a green one because of budget

limitations. The sale of the green tree was enjoyed because of an attractive display of flocked trees.

Another advantage of flocking is because of the higher cost of a flocked Christmas tree, the family who can afford one buys it early to enjoy it as long as possible. At that early time of the season your basic green tree price is highest and most profitable.

The display of colored flocked trees will create a fascinating attraction at your sales location. The ultimate in flocked Christmas tree beauty is the application of a second color of flock. A bright or deep tone should be used for the base color, then it should be accented with white or a contrasting pastel color.

Flocked Christmas trees have gained popularity with retailers because:

1. Flocked trees increase tree sales.
2. The profit from the sale of a flocked tree is much more than the profit from that same tree sold green.
3. Properly displayed flocked trees create a professional and attractive appearance.
4. Flocked trees increase the number of early sales.
5. Flock increases the attractiveness and salability of all trees, even less than perfect ones.
6. The cost of a tree which is "browning" or "losing needles" can be salvaged with the application of flock.
7. There is additional profit with the sale of the stand on the tree and the polytubing used to protect the tree.

When selecting a tree for flocking, the best tree can be selected and then once flocked you can ask top dollar for its beauty and perfection. You can also select a less than perfect tree and improve its appearance with the application of flock.

Before the selected tree is flocked it should be determined how much flock is going to be applied. Open limbed trees, such as the Noble Fir, are equally beautiful when flocked either light or heavy. The general opinion is that sheared trees look better when lightly flocked. It is best not to apply a heavy coating of flock to sheared trees. This will cause the lower branches to sag, creating open areas.

With a light to medium coat of flock the tree will look like it has been coated with a heavy, or a light snow. With a heavy coating of flock the tree will look like it has been in a heavy snow storm.

For the best results flock should be applied with a vertical movement. Apply the material starting at the top of tree and working downward. This method will save flock and time. Spot application should then be applied, where needed, to complete a uniform coverage of the flock.

Flocked trees need to be protected from damage prior to transporting to the customer's home. They can be easily protected with the use of polyethylene tubing.

Poly tubing is available in four different sizes:

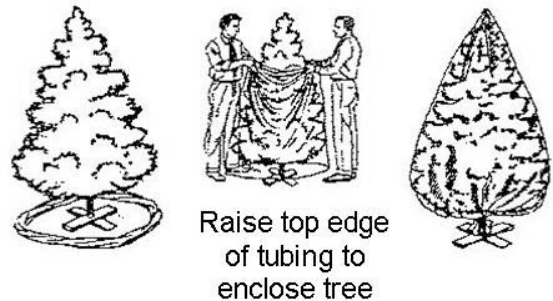
54" - with a 34" diameter

72" - with a 46" diameter

84" - with a 53" diameter

96" - with a 61" diameter

All four sizes of tubing come in continuous 500 foot rolls. The tubing should be cut two feet longer than the height of the tree. Gather the desired length of tubing into the shape of a donut. Place it on the ground and stand the tree in the center of the tubing ring. Pull the tubing up and around the tree until the tubing extends about six inches past the top of the tree. Lay the tree on its side and secure the tubing with twine just above the tip and around the trunk above the stand.



The protection of the tubing will allow the tree to be secured to the top of a vehicle without damage to the tree, if reasonable care is used.

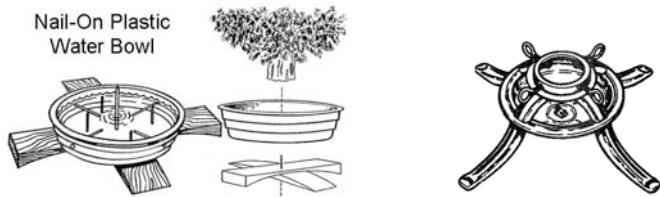
## EVERGREEN ACCESSORIES AND TREE RELATED ACCESSORIES

One way to increase your profit is to display and sell an attractive assortment of evergreen accessories. The display should include evergreen boughs, wreaths, garlands, pine cones, mistletoe and holly. Evergreen items can be purchased from your vendors. Your customers have decorative imaginations and they will think of many practical uses for these items.

Flocking evergreen boughs will increase their value and enhance their beauty. A few boughs, a couple of pine cones, and some wide, red ribbon will make an attractive door swag.

In keeping with the thought of selling your Christmas tree customers more items, you should have available an inventory of Christmas tree related items.

The most beneficial item to your customer is a water reservoir Christmas tree stand. It is a proven fact that the safest Christmas tree is a freshly cut tree (one that has retained 65% of its moisture) which is displayed in a tree stand filled with water. The advantage of a water reservoir tree stand is that it keeps the tree fresh and moist. Water reservoirs are available in all price ranges, from the inexpensive disposable models to the models that claim to last a lifetime.



Before putting any tree in a water reservoir stand approximately 1/2" of the butt needs to be sawed off. This fresh cut will allow the tree to take up water. Keep the water level in the water reservoir at least one inch higher than the bottom of the butt at all times.

A tree removal bag is another customer service item. It is a white plastic bag (sealed at one end) that is 90" wide and 104" long. This bag is for the removal of the green tree from the home after the season, without the usual mess.

Selling tree decorations at a Christmas tree sales location has never been very successful. The average tree buying customer doesn't remember from one year to another whether they need more ornaments. This decision is usually made during the decorating process. Then the customer runs to the nearest store, not all the way back to your location.

## INVENTORY ROTATION

Customers cannot buy Christmas trees that they cannot see. For this reason it is important that all personnel understand the importance of keeping the tree display area completely stocked at all times.

When restocking the tree display area, the better quality trees should be displayed before the lesser quality ones.

If any trees on display show signs of needle loss or browning because of warm weather or damage due to rough handling they need to be removed to the storage area. These trees should be flocked, if they can be made saleable by doing so. Lesser quality trees which cannot be improved with flocking should be left for the price conscious buyers who shop late in the season. Immediately replace all removed trees with a fresh/better quality tree.

Near the end of the season, as your inventory is reduced, the remaining trees should be shifted towards the front of the display area, keeping front racks fully stocked. Fully stocked display racks will be more attractive to customers.

## SECURITY

To minimize the chance of money being stolen by anyone, including employees, do not allow large amounts of money to accumulate in the cash box or register.

Remove accumulated money not needed for change and hide it in the office or a secure location. The location of the surplus money should be known only to very key people.

Customers have been known to throw trees over the fence for retrieving later. This usually requires two people, one to pre-occupy the sales clerk in one area, while the other throws a tree over the fence in another area.

During business hours, have only one gate open for both entering and exiting. If possible the gate should be in view of the cashier. After business hours all gates should be locked and the fence around the lot should be secure.

A night watchman is advantageous only if your sales lot is in a neighborhood where he is absolutely needed. If you have an office, leave a light on all night in the office, close the curtains or blinds if you have them, and leave a radio on and turned up. A spare car parked inside the fence, near the office may discourage trespassers.

## STOCK LIQUIDATION

Stock liquidation will not be a concern to all retailers. It usually becomes a factor for those retailers who have not been realistic with their tree purchases.

If for any reason, market conditions, optimistic purchasing, abnormal competition, etc., you find your stock in excess of what you can sell for a fair profit, try wholesaling your surplus inventory to another dealer. This dealer should be outside your local marketing area. Do this before the weekend which falls closest to the middle of the month, preferably before December 15.

There is a time during the sales period of any perishable commodity where the demand for that item is greatly reduced. This is commonly known as the "break" in the market. Many years the market "break" for Christmas trees is around the 15th of December. The wholesale price you could get for surplus trees after this "break" in the market will be less than your cost.

Assuming you have inventory left during the last two or three days before Christmas, how are you going to dispose of them? Even if the remaining inventory of trees is 10% or less of your original purchases it still represents money. You have several choices for disposing of your remaining inventory:

1. You have had a long season and you have made a good profit, so let's close up early.
  - A. You can haul the inventory to the dump and pay to dispose of the trees.
  - B. Donate the remaining trees to a charity.
  - C. Sell the inventory to a competitor who does plan to continue selling trees until the end.
  - D. Consign the inventory to a couple of your better employees on a profit split basis.
2. Continue selling until the end and increase your profit.

- A. Retain your prices, giving small or reasonable discounts a necessary to make a sale.
- B. Don't allow a customer to walk out without a tree. You may decide to post "SALE" signs, offering a discount, 20%, 25%, etc.



## **LOT DISASSEMBLY**

More people are injured while disassembling a Christmas tree sales location than during any other time of the season. Be sure your employees put safety first.

Insist that all nails be removed from all lumber as the material is taken down. Failure to do this can result in someone stepping on an exposed nail. Bending the nails over instead of removing them can result in someone handling the material later and getting their hand cut.

All disassembly work should be done with care and the proper tools. Try to salvage as much of the materials as possible.

## **JOIN CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATIONS**

After you have completed a season or two of retailing Christmas trees, you will have learned some valuable lessons. If you are to become a professional Christmas tree retailer it will be necessary to increase your knowledge of all phases of the Christmas tree industry. The best and easiest way to do this is to join your local and national Christmas tree associations.

The monetary advantages of joining these associations are numerous. Most members will readily admit that they have gained far more than they have contributed by belonging to these associations.

You will gain a well-rounded knowledge of the Christmas tree growing problems which will directly affect you as a retailer. You will learn to recognize Christmas tree damage caused by disease, insects, pests, and unprofessional culture practices. These associations publish periodicals which will acquaint you with and advise you on how to deal with national and local problems which affect the Christmas tree industry.

The areas of concern include legislation which relates to income, capital gains, sales and transportation taxes. Marketing changes and trends including the advertising and promotion of "Real" Christmas trees, which has proven to be very effective. Specially qualified professionals inform the membership of new and different species of Christmas trees, their advantages and disadvantages as well as maintenance, growing and culture methods. You will learn of the numerous products which are available. These products will assist you in experiencing greater efficiency and profit in retailing.

Do yourself a favor – Join your local and national Christmas tree associations now.

## Retail Lot Layout Samples

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