

1952

You and Your Christmas Tree

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Recommended Citation

Wilcox, Virginia (1952) "You and Your Christmas Tree," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 32 : No. 5 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol32/iss5/5>

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You and Your Christmas



by Virginia Wilcox
Technical Journalism Sophomore

A TREE IS A TREE, but upon investigation you would find an almost infinite variety of appropriate trees for Christmas. In color alone no two species or varieties of evergreens are exactly the same. Of the six fundamental colors of the solar spectrum, the foliage of evergreen trees displays green, yellow and blue.

On many species the underside of the needle is in different color than the upperside. Generally such needles are bluish beneath. Blue evergreen, of which there is a large number, show many shades of blue, which vary by species, and also by season. Much of their color isn't a pigment of the leaf itself, but a bloom or sheen such as we find on grapes or plums.

It is not only in difference of color, but in texture of foliage that evergreens offer variety. Even though their colors are similar, the delicate needles of Hemlock give a vastly different effect than some coarse-needled pine.

The Popular Christmas Trees

The three most popular evergreens for Christmas, however, are the fir, spruce and pine.

Fir trees, especially the Douglas fir, are generally considered the best American Christmas trees. The characteristics making them so popular are close set branches, a sturdy center stem to support the top ornament, and soft flat needles growing singly along the branches. Douglas firs hold their needles longer than other firs, and have the unique advantage of non-sticky boughs.

Remarkable for its bright, fresh color, the spruce is also a popular tree for decorating. It is unusually symmetrical, compact, and husky, this characteristic being evident even in the smallest trees. One of the more expensive members of this family, the Blue Spruce, is a beautiful and symmetrical tree used extensively for outdoor decoration.

Favorite Pines

Pines are the most easily recognized because their needles are always arranged in bundles, and, with but a few exceptions, the needles are in groups of two, three, or four, with a paper sheath at their base. The Austrian Pine has deep green needles which are straight and slender, and four to five inches long.

Another favorite, the Scotch Pine has straight stems branching regularly, and three-inch long needles which twist into loose spirals. Pines are slightly more expensive than the other types of trees, but they do not shed their needles, which explains one important reason for their popularity.

Many Uses for Evergreens

Unusually graceful with pendulous, flowing branches is the hemlock, which was once widely used for Christmas. It is rapidly taking a back seat, because it sheds so badly, despite the latex coating often applied to secure them.

Evergreens are used in other ways besides in the form of a complete tree. They appear in centerpiece arrangements; banked over doorways; draped atop mantles and bookcases; combined with strings of colored lights to brighten front entrances. One graceful branch (spruce, for instance) might be hung against a wall sprinkled with colored or silver and gold balls, bright ribbons.

Long pine greens combined with cones and copper bells make a lavish outside door-decoration. Spruce wreaths are also popular door-pieces. The familiar evergreen ropes combined with colored lights are as popular as ever for draping both outside and in.

Christmas Accessories

Most people seem to prefer the use of many colored balls and lights in their decoration, but some favor using only gold or silver balls, and all blue or white lights. The blue bulbs are used more often on outdoor trees for their effect against the white snow.

Another popular treatment of the Christmas tree is to spray it white or silver, again hanging it with multicolored or silver balls and tinsel. Some people prefer the green color and fragrance of the old-fashioned evergreen, since they are less artificial.

The impression of snow on the branches is created with angel hair or artificial snow, or by spreading on a thin layer of whipped soapsuds and letting it dry.

Such things as holly, mistletoe and the poinsetta cannot be disregarded as symbols of Christmas. Holly, with its sharp prickles and blood-red berries, was said to have been in the Saviour's crown of thorns.

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Immortal Oratorio—

(Continued from page 26)

The audience seemed to be affected as much as Handel during that first performance of the "Hallelujah" chorus. The King of England was so enthralled that he rose, followed by the rest of the audience, and remained standing till the last "Hallelujah" died away. This began the custom, followed now both in England and the United States, of standing during the "Hallelujah" chorus.

The music and message contained in "The Messiah" are of timeless beauty and are as effective now in 1952 as they were in Handel's time. Its lasting power is explained by a music critic who said, "Other oratorios may be compared, one with another; 'The Messiah' stands alone, a majestic monument to the memory of its composer and to the highest aspirations of man."

"Hallelujah" Climax

The great "Hallelujah" chorus is the triumph of the work and its real climax. Beginning with repeated shouts of "Hallelujah," it works into phrases which grow out of each other, sustaining and interweaving with the "Hallelujah." The harmonic effects make up a chorus that has never been excelled, both in grandeur and sublimity.

After listening to the first performance of this chorus, Handel said, "I did think I did see all heaven before me, and the great God himself."

Your Christmas Tree—

(Continued from page 11)

It is used effectively to add touches of color to centerpieces, wreaths and holiday corsages. The tiny, waxy white berries of the mistletoe are likewise used in table decorations and candle arrangements to add sparkle. Most people don't neglect to hang a sprig tied with a red bow from a doorway or chandelier.

There is much opportunity for originality in decorating a tree. Adorning a small green tree with tiny red ribbon bows, or striped candy canes makes for an interesting and attractive Christmas decoration. Cookies of various sizes and shapes used as tree ornaments give a novel effect also. One department on campus decorated a tree using a large A at the top, and then covering the rest of the branches with B's and C's and suitable items to represent various departments.

The origin of all these decorations has been lost in the maze of antiquity, but it is thought that the use of holly, evergreen, and the other various decorations were used to offer winter hospitality to the spirits that were supposed to haunt the leafless woods. The decorations today symbolize as much in the thought of hospitality and a beautiful holiday season.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

(This poem inspired the picture on the Homemaker cover.)

On the *first day* of Christmas
My true love gave to me
A partridge in a pear tree.

★ ★

On the *second day* of Christmas
My true love gave to me
*Two turtle doves and a partridge
in a pear tree.*

★ ★

On the *third day* of Christmas
My true love gave to me
*Three French hens, two turtle
doves and a partridge in a
pear tree.*

★

*Fourth day—Four calling birds,
etc.*

★

Fifth day—Five golden rings, etc.

★

Sixth day—Six geese a laying, etc.

★

*Seventh day—Seven swans a
swimming, etc.*

★

*Eighth day—Eight maids a milking,
etc.*

★

*Ninth day—Nine pipers piping,
etc.*

★

*Tenth day—Ten ladies dancing,
etc.*

★

*Eleventh day—Eleven lords a
leaping, etc.*

★

*Twelfth day—Twelve fiddlers
fiddling, etc.*

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