

Keeping your Evergreen Green

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O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, how lovely are thy branches. The evergreen is a prominent symbol of the holiday season, but Christmas tree branches are more lovely when they aren't dropping pine needles into the carpet. Thankfully, one easy task will help your tree's branches stay lovely for the rest of the season.

The tradition of decorating homes with evergreen boughs dates back to the early Romans, according to Dixie Sandborn with Michigan State University Extension. Fir trees were first used as Christmas trees around 1,000 years ago. However, the tradition became more popular after Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were shown standing in front of their Christmas tree in the London News in 1846¹. One of Thomas Edison's assistants developed the idea for electric Christmas tree lights in 1882, with the first sale of Christmas lights in 1890².

While individuals who are celebrating Christmas this year have many options when it comes to their trees and decorations, keeping fresh cut trees watered will help the tree stay hydrated. This will help keep the pine needles from dropping, and also keep the tree from drying excessively and becoming a fire hazard. Christmas lights should be turned off unless the tree is supervised by someone in the house in case of a fire.

Another topic you may have seen in the news related to fresh cut Christmas trees are praying mantis eggs. The eggs are attached to the branches of the evergreen trees and when the trees are brought inside in the warmth of homes, the eggs may begin to hatch. However, simply removing the branch the egg casings are attached to and leaving the branch outside will allow the eggs to hatch naturally. The egg casings are round and brown in appearance, and can contain several hundred eggs in each.

Keeping your fresh cut decorations green for the holidays can be achieved with adequate water and by checking the tree for dry branches. Before bringing the greenery into your home, check the branches for any eggs or animals that may be attached to the tree. For more information on how to keep your greenery festive this season, contact the Highland County Extension Office at 937-393-1918.

Upcoming Events:

A fifth **Beef Quality Assurance Training** will be held at Union Stockyards on Tuesday, January 22, 2018, at 6:30 P.M. Please RSVP to the Highland County Extension Office at 937-393-1918.

The next **Highland County Master Gardener Volunteer** meeting will be held on Thursday, January 17, 2019, at 10 AM in the Large Meeting Room in the basement of 110 Governor Foraker Place, Hillsboro, OH.

Fertilizer and Pesticide Recertifications:

February 19, 2019

Ponderosa Banquet Center, 545 S. High Street, Hillsboro, Ohio 45133

5:00 pm to 6:00 pm Fertilizer Recertification – Private and Commercial

6:30 pm Pesticide Recertification (Core, 1, 2,3, 4, 5, 6) Private Applicators Only

March 4, 2018

Ponderosa Banquet Center, 545 S. High Street, Hillsboro, Ohio 45133

10:00 am to 11:00 am Fertilizer Recertification – Private and Commercial

11:30 am Pesticide Recertification (Core, 1, 2,3, 4, 5, 6) Private Applicators Only

Registration details will come in the mail from the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Registration for OSU Extension Pesticide and Fertilizer and your renewal application for ODA Pesticide/Fertilizer must both be completed. Meals will be included at each recertification training at Ponderosa.

¹History. 2018. History of Christmas Trees. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees>.

²University of Illinois Extension. 2018. Christmas Tree Facts. Retrieved from: <http://extension.illinois.edu/trees/facts.cfm>.