

Selecting the perfect Christmas tree: Tree types

(MSU) **Fraser fir** has blue-green [soft] needles with silvery undersides. The branches are stiff and hold up well to ornaments. The trees have a pleasant scent and needle retention is excellent. For more pictures and information on this species, see MSU's [Fraser fir Youtube video](#).

(NCTA) The Fraser Fir branches turn slightly upward. They have good form and needle-retention. They are dark blue-green in color. They have a pleasant scent and excellent shipping characteristics as well. Leaves (needles) are flattened, dark-green with a medial groove on the upper side and two broad silvery-white bands on the lower surface. Leaves are 1/2 to one inch long, have a broad circular base, and are usually dark green on the upper surface and lighter on the lower surface. On lower branches, leaves are two-ranked (occurring in two opposite rows). On upper twigs, leaves tend to curl upward forming a more "U-shaped" appearance.



Fraser fir Photo credit: Bert Cregg and Jill O'Donnell, MSU



Fraser Fir Photo Credit NCTA

(MSU) **Scots pine** has long been the traditional choice for many Michigan families. Scots pines are dense trees with dark-green needles. Stiff branches hold up well to ornaments and needle retention is excellent. Scots pine is also an economical choice. For more pictures and information on this species, see MSU's [Scots pine YouTube video](#).

(NCTA) Scotch Pine, as a Christmas tree, is known for its excellent needle retention and good keepability. It resists drying and if permitted to become dry does not drop its needles. When displayed in a water filled container it will remain fresh for the normal 3 to 4 week Christmas season. Like all natural trees it is readily recyclable and has many different uses following the Christmas holidays.



Scots Pine Photo credit: Bert Cregg and Jill O'Donnell, MSU



Scotch Pine Photo credit: NCTA

(MSU) **Douglas fir** is a dense tree with light green needles. The needles are very soft. The branches are not as stiff as some other species, so you'll need to stick with lighter-weight ornaments. This is also another good choice for budget-conscious consumers. For more pictures and information on this species, see MSU's [Douglas fir YouTube video](#).

(NCTA) The Douglas Fir soft needles are dark green - blue green in color and are approximately 1 - 1 ½ in. in length. The douglas fir needles radiate in all directions from the branch. When crushed, these needles have a sweet fragrance. They are one of the top major Christmas tree species in the U.S.



Douglas Fir Photo credit: Bert Cregg and Jill O'Donnell, MSU



Douglas Fir Photo credit: NCTA

(MSU) **Black hills spruce** are known for their traditional appearance. The needles are shorter and softer than Colorado blue spruce. Black hills spruce needles have excellent color, typically a gray-ish green to bluish-green. Branches are stiff and hold up well to ornaments.

(NCTA) The White Spruce (see note) is excellent for ornaments; it's short, stiff needles are $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long and have a blunt tip. They are bluish-green - green in color, but have a bad aroma when needles are crushed. They have excellent foliage color and have a good, natural shape. The needle retention is better in a White Spruce than it is among other spruces.

Note: Black Hills Spruce is a naturally occurring variety of white spruce, but is better adapted to Midwest regions than white spruce.



Black Hills Spruce Photo credit: Bert Cregg and Jill O'Donnell, MSU



Black Hills Spruce Photo credit: Arrowhead nursery

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National Christmas Tree Association

<http://www.realchristmastrees.org/dnn/Education/Tree-Varieties/Scotch-Pine>