

This season, avoid toxic chemicals with a real Christmas tree

It's hard to imagine the Christmas season without a tree to decorate and enjoy throughout the holiday season. For some, the decision to purchase an artificial Christmas tree might seem like the convenient and "green" thing to do, but purchasing an artificial Christmas "tree" can pose serious affects to your health, the environment and the local economy.

Artificial Christmas "trees" are composed of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a non-renewable and potentially polluting petroleum product. PVC contains Phthalates, which can accumulate in body tissues and damage the liver, lungs, and reproductive organs. Lead - a cumulative poison - is often used in the production of PVC and can lead to environmental and health related problems, including nervous system damage, particularly in children.

Additionally, energy use from fossil fuels is required in the long distance transport of artificial Christmas "trees", often half-way around the world, adding more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

Alternatively, real Christmas trees are made naturally from sunlight, soil and water. They produce absolutely no greenhouse gases and actually absorb carbon dioxide, which is a big component of global warming.

Disposal

Artificial Christmas "trees" usually last between 7 and 10 years. Because they cannot be recycled when they are no longer needed, they either end up at the land fill or in the incinerator. When dumped at a landfill, it takes generations before it will breakdown, and in so doing, take up land space. When they are incinerated, dangerous dioxins and other carcinogens are released into the air

which can pose serious health risks like cancer.

Conversely, real Christmas trees are completely recyclable and biodegradable. They can be grown in the backyard for wildlife habitat, and when the Christmas season is finished, be chipped for mulch or used for firewood.

Where Trees Come From

Real Christmas trees are planted much like an agricultural crop, providing wildlife habitat as they grow. They stabilize and protect the soil from erosion and act as a natural air filter, removing carbon dioxide. Each acre of growing Christmas trees provides the necessary daily amount of oxygen for 18 people. Trees also sequester carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, from the air. They provide rural employment to farmers and contribute millions of dollars to the rural Canadian economy.

Finally, most artificial Christmas "trees" are produced in factories in China, Taiwan, and Korea where less stringent environmental regulations exist. By purchasing these foreign-produced products you weaken the ability of Canadian growers and associated industries to make a living.

A real Christmas tree is the environmentally friendly choice.

Michael Rosen and Don Cameron

Michael Rosen is Vice-President of the Tree Canada Foundation, a Canadian organization that helps facilitate the planting and care of trees throughout urban and rural Canada.

Don Cameron is a Nova Scotia based forester. He can be reached through the Tree Canada Foundation.

News from Cookstown United Church

by Susan Stein

On Sunday, December 1st, the Advent Hangings, which were designed, made and donated to the church by Hattie and Don Milne, were dedicated in celebration of Fred and Faye Elines and Glenn and Joanne Williams for their work with the Youth Group.

On Sunday, December 17, the African Djembe Drum, purchased by the ladies of the Cookstown UCW to enhance music and worship, were dedicated to the glory and

praise of God.

The Sunday School held the service with a presentation of Christmas Symbols: the garland - God's Welcome extended to all people; the poinsettia - a symbol of the unexpected; the Wreath - a symbol of never ending love; the Candle - God Promises to give light. Many thanks to Kiernan power and Sunday school for all their hard work and for sharing this wonderful presentation with the congregation. My best wishes, a Merry and healthy Christmas to all.

Art Unique Gallery and Gifts

Art Unique Gallery is open until 5 p.m. Christmas Eve at their new location. Many one of a kind gifts available. These include jewellery by Elizabeth Kobelka, pottery by Ruth Draper and award winning Elsa Broder, hand painted carved wood by Lynn Oborn as well as some reasonably priced paintings by B.J. Thompson, from Beeton and John Miller from Tottenham. Also Shirley Ford from Alliston, has just

brought in some beautiful hand painted silk scarves. Art Unique Gallery and Gifts is located at 4293 2nd Line, R. R. # 1, Cookstown, 2 km north of the lights at the corner of Cty. Rd. 27 and the 2nd Line of Innisfil. The gallery is open every day until Christmas, 10 to 5 and after Christmas by appointment or by chance. Phone 705-458-4466 or e-mail ruth35@rogers.com

Don't take Christmas away, says B'nai Brith

B'nai Brith Canada has called the decision by a Toronto judge to ban a Christmas tree from being displayed in the lobby of a provincial courthouse "contrary to Canada's multicultural spirit".

"In Canada we are taught to celebrate our differences and, wherever possible, to reasonably accommodate our neighbours," said Frank Dimant, B'nai Brith Canada's Executive Vice President. "The vibrancy of our multicultural society depends on us being exposed in positive ways to each other's religious practices, and this will sure-

ly lead to tolerance and respect for all peoples, cultures, and ethnicities.

"Canadians should be welcome to celebrate the religious and cultural uniqueness of their holidays, and that ought to include, for example, Christmas trees at this time of year in public places, or menorahs being displayed during the Chanukah season. The goal should not be to remove these special occasions from public life, but instead to ensure that all religions have a place in the cultural fabric of Canadian society."

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