

a wide variety of birds and mammals. It's also a sustainable crop — for every tree that's harvested, at least three seedlings are planted in its place.

Natural Christmas trees are also 100% recyclable and biodegradable. Most municipalities — including those in the Kawarthas — collect discarded natural Christmas trees and chip them for use as mulching materials. Discarded natural trees can also be used as bird feeders, wood products can be made from their stems, or they can be used as wildlife cover in fish ponds and woodlots.

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Common types of Christmas trees

If you do decide to harvest your own tree this year (or buy a pre-cut one), here's a quick primer on the most common tree species available:

Scots Pine (Scotch Pine) – The most popular Christmas tree in Canada, the Scots Pine is a thick and hardy tree. It resists drying and holds its needles well over the holidays. However, the needles are tough and very pointy.

Balsam Fir – Almost as popular as the Scots Pine, the Balsam Fir holds its dark-green needles well and is a good choice if the decorated tree will be left standing for a longer period of time. Balsam fir branches work well for lighter Christmas ornaments, and the tree has a strong fragrance.

Fraser Fir – A Christmas tree that's become very popular in recent years, the Fraser Fir is known for holding its attractive dark blue-green needles and its pleasant scent. Fraser Firs are generally more expensive than other trees as the species has a much longer growing cycle.

Norway Spruce – The traditional Christmas tree in Britain, the Norway spruce is attractive but has a tendency to drop its needles, particularly towards the end of the holidays — especially if the tree is not cut fresh and kept properly watered.

White Spruce – The dense foliage and symmetrical proportions of the White Spruce make it a very beautiful Christmas tree. The tree has a strong scent and its strong slender twigs hold ornaments well. However, the White Spruce is very thirsty and must be watered regularly to prevent it from losing its needles.

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Caring for your tree

After you get your tree, here are some tips to keep it fresh and safe: