

'Oh, Christmas tree'

Care and selection are important for Yuletide enjoyment

By **BARB VOS**

Special to the Independent/Free Press

If you plan to buy a natural Christmas tree this year, buy the freshest one available and keep it fresh. These are the two most important things to remember in selecting and caring for a real Christmas tree.

To check for freshness, follow a few tests:

Gently stroke a branch with needles. If the tree is fresh, the needles should not come off in your hand. Look on the ground around the standing tree. If there is an excessive number of green needles on the ground, it might be wise to reject the tree.

Place a needle between your thumb and forefinger and bring the ends together. With the exception of balsam fir, if the tree is fresh, the needle should bend, not break.

After you have selected the tree of your choice, keep it fresh in your home. Store it in sheltered unheated areas, such as a porch or garage until you are ready to decorate it. Saw off about an inch of the butt and put the base of the trunk in snow or in a pail of water.

When you bring the tree indoors for decorating, make a fresh cut across the butt of the tree. The cut removes possible

clotted resins that could prevent the tree from absorbing water.

Once the tree is securely mounted in the stand, keep the stand filled with water by adding to it daily. A tree may absorb from a pint to a gallon of water daily, depending upon its size and condition.

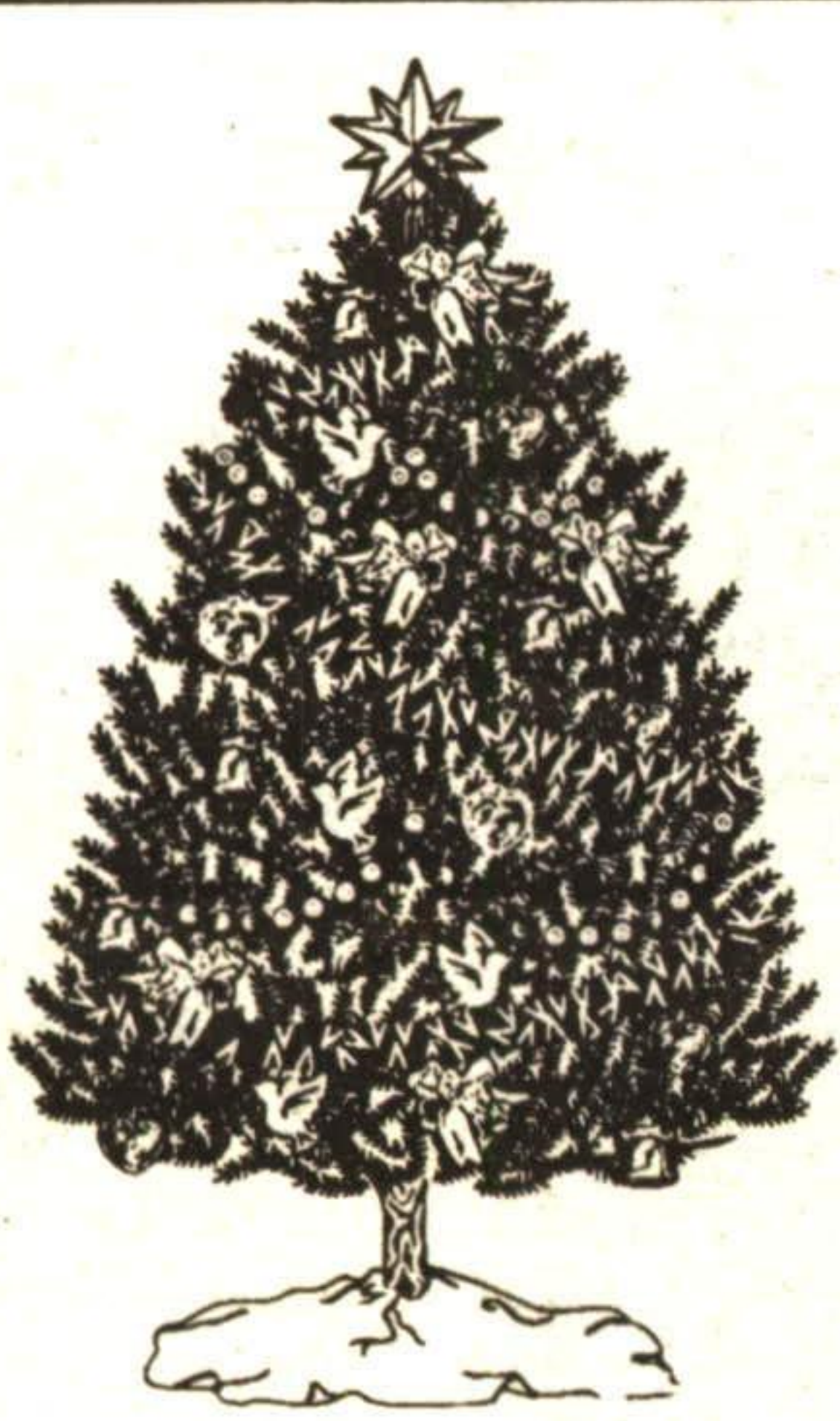
The water will prevent the needles from drying and the boughs of the tree from drooping. The tree will remain fresh all through the season. It will not be a hazard in the home.

A Christmas tree with moisture in its branches and needles is no more flammable than a damp leaf.

Today's Christmas tree producer works hard to get quality trees to market in the freshest condition possible. A plantation (commercially) grown tree is sheared annually for greater symmetry and some varieties are fertilized to promote greener and healthier foliage.

Natural Christmas trees offer so much pleasure to any Christmas celebration. That is why so many Canadian families choose the real tree in their homes for a truly traditional Christmas.

(Barb Vos represents Northern Hardwood tree farm, located on Eramosa/Milton town line between Hwy. 7 and Guelph Line.



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