

Making An Eco-Friendly Choice: The Environmental Debate Settled

Each holiday season, there are news articles, web sites and commentators who debate whether it is better for the environment to use an artificial Christmas tree or a natural Christmas tree. This can often be confusing to consumers who want to make an eco-friendly choice, but can't find a simple, straight-forward "apples to apples" comparison. **The table below illustrates that Real Christmas Trees are the best environmental choice.**

Real Trees	Artificial Trees
<u>PLACE OF ORIGIN</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• United States & Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 85% from China
<u>METHOD OF PRODUCTION</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• farming• planting takes place Jan-May• estimated 40-45 million trees planted in 2008 in North America• estimated 446 million trees growing on farms in U.S.• tree farms support complex eco-systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• factory• raw materials sent to factory & assembled into final product• product is shipped to U.S. then distributed to stores• number of factories unknown• factories only consume natural resources
<u>COMPONENTS</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plant tissue• 100% biodegradable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plastics and metals• non-biodegradable
<u>PVC FREE?</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No
<u>LEAD FREE?</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No (lead is used in the process of making PVC plastic)
<u>CARBON NEUTRAL?</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No

- trees absorb carbon dioxide
- when decomposing, carbon, nitrogen and other elements are released into soil
- plastic is a petroleum byproduct

CHEMICALS?

- No
- Scientists have measured cut Christmas trees for chemical residue and not found any significant amounts
- Many different bugs, fungi and parasites can attack and kill trees, so farmers may use pesticides to keep consumers' trees healthy and alive until harvest
- Most pesticides are ground applied
- Herbicides are used to suppress, not kill off, weeds to prevent soil erosion
- If someone tells you “there are chemicals on cut Christmas trees” they are wrong
- Yes
- PVC itself is a dangerous chemical
- Manufacture of PVC creates and disperses dioxins, the most toxic man-made chemical known
- Released into air or water, dioxins enter the food chain, where they accumulate in fatty tissues of animals and humans, a potential risk for causing cancer, damaging immune functions and impairing children's development

DISPOSAL

- Recycled
- Used trees can be recycled in a variety of ways
- Decomposing trees add nutrients back into the earth
- Landfill
- Fake trees can't be recycled and end up in landfills
- All of the accumulated fake trees are a burden to the environment indefinitely

RENEWABLE RESOURCE?

- Yes
- New trees are planted every year
- No
- Petroleum, used to make plastic, is a non-renewable resource, as are metals

ECO-FRIENDLY?

- Yes
- No