## Production Information

Coniferous trees have cones that are made of scales. The scales are actually specialized leaves. Most coniferous trees have both male and female cones. Male cones are soft, small and produce pollen. Female cones produce eggs, are larger and woody. Pollen is transported by the wind.

Producers must continue to replant trees in order to have an adequate supply for consumers and to make up for trees lost to disease, poor growth and competition from other plants. Growers will often plant one to three new seedlings for every tree they harvest. Seedlings are grown in nurseries and are often 3-5 years old when they are planted in the field on tree farms. More than 2,000 trees are usually planted per acre. On an average 1,000-1,500 of these trees will survive. In the North, perhaps 750 trees will remain. Almost all trees require shearing to attain the Christmas tree shape. Pruning must be done annually to give trees the more even shape and denser look people prefer to see in their natural Christmas trees. Mice and meadow voles can kill entire stands of young trees by eating the bark under the winter snow cover. This is called girdling. Regular mowing and weed control helps to keep a rodent population exposed to natural predators. At six to seven feet, trees are ready for harvest. It takes six to ten years of fighting heavy rain, wind, hail and drought to get a mature tree.

## Wisconsin Production

There are 1387 Christmas tree farms in Wisconsin with over 36,000 acres of trees. About 1.8 million Christmas trees are harvested annually in Wisconsin and over 600,000 wreaths and garland made each year. The economic impact of the Christmas tree industry is over $50 million annually. Wisconsin ranks #5 in the number of trees harvested. The principal trees grown in Wisconsin include: Balsam Fir, Fraser Fir, Scotch Pine, White Pine and Spruce (White, Black Hills and Colorado).

## Career Information

Seasonal work includes tree planters in the spring, shearing crews to prune the branches, harvesting crews in the fall, and people to help in tree sales from Thanksgiving until Christmas. People also are needed to make wreaths and other decorations from trees. Crop consultants can help with soil and foliage tests, pest and animal control, and disease prevention and treatment. Growers may specialize in seedlings that are sold to tree producers.

## Other Information

To get trees ready for harvest, each tree is cut, shaken to remove dead needles, and then baled using a machine which presses the branches against the trunk, holding them in place with netting or twine. This protects the tree and makes it easier to handle for shipping. As many as 800 baled trees can be loaded in a big tractor trailer heading for a large retail location.

Some farmers plant small trees into pots. These are for people who want to buy a "living" tree which can be planted in their garden in the spring.

Real Christmas trees are renewable and help to stabilize soil, protect water supplies and provide refuge for wildlife. They are often grown on soils that won't support other crops.

## Trivia

- In 2003, 21% of Christmas trees sold were from chain stores, 15% by non-profit groups, 13% from retail lots and 35% from choose and cut farms.
- An acre of Christmas trees provides for the daily oxygen requirements of 18 people.
- All 50 states grow Christmas trees.