



Christmas Tree Cutting

Sitka Ranger District, Tongass National Forest

On National Forest Lands in the Sitka Area

Selecting Christmas trees can be a challenging family tradition whether purchasing from local clubs, organizations or businesses or taking the time to head to the great outdoors. Generally, in the Sitka area most national forest system land away from the Sitka road system is open to the cutting of Christmas trees for personal use only, not to be cut and sold. However, national forest system lands on or near the Sitka road system that actually have trees the size necessary for use as Christmas trees are very limited.

On Sitka road system - Most of the land area immediately adjacent to the Sitka road system is not national forest land. These areas are owned by private individuals, native corporations, Sheldon Jackson College, the City and Borough of Sitka or the State of Alaska. Permission must be obtained from the land owners before looking for Christmas trees in these areas.

National Forest lands closed to the cutting of Christmas trees are:

- Starrigavan Recreation Area which includes the Bayside Loop, Estuary Loop, Backpacker Loop, the picnic area, Estuary Boardwalk Trail and Parking Lot, Bird Viewing Deck area, the Mosquito Cove Trailhead Parking Lot and the accessible portion of the Mosquito Cove Trail.
- Sawmill Creek Campground off Blue Lake Road;
- Harbor Mountain Recreation Area which is 1/4 mile either side of road from the national forest boundary sign to the end of the road;
- Within Starrigavan Valley for 1.5 miles beginning at the ATV trail gate.

Outlying Areas – Those with boats are not restricted to the Sitka road system in selecting a tree. However, remember that the following areas are not national forest land: areas to the north and upper end of Katlian Bay and the islands nearest town from Middle Island south to Long Island. These areas are in private or state ownership. Permission must be obtained from the land owners before looking for Christmas trees in these areas.



Selecting a tree - Please limit to one tree per household. Find a suitable tree in an area not closed to cutting trees and at least 20 feet from a national forest road or trail. Find a tree that will fit in the space available indoors; do not cut the top out of a tree. Cut the tree as low to the ground as possible. Trim the tree while out in the woods, scatter the branches.



Caring for a Christmas tree - Cut 1-2 inches off the butt end. This fresh cut will allow the tree to take up water more readily once it is moved indoors. Fill the tree stand with water immediately, replenishing the water supply at least every few hours the first day in order to maintain an adequate water level. A sufficient supply of water each day will minimize needle drop and maximize the tree's fire resistance. Keep a decorated tree in a cool area indoors to prevent rapid drying of foliage. Decorate with safe, non burnable materials. Always turn tree lights off when leaving home.



Christmas Tree Species found naturally around Sitka -

Sitka spruce needles are very sharp to the touch which can make tree decorating and take down difficult. Spruce trees are the best looking when cut less than a week before Christmas.

Western or mountain hemlock lose needles readily after being cut, therefore, hemlock is not suitable as a Christmas tree.

Shore or bull pine is common in muskegs and holds needles longer than either spruce or hemlock. However, remember that these pines are slow growing in the muskeg environment. Any size tree can be very old. Muskegs in outlying areas away from the Sitka road system are best locations for these.

Alaska yellow cedar is best at keeping its needles. However, cedar does not hold a shape as well as the other trees. Cedar boughs make beautiful wreaths and also provide a pleasant fragrance indoors.



Alaska yellow cedar



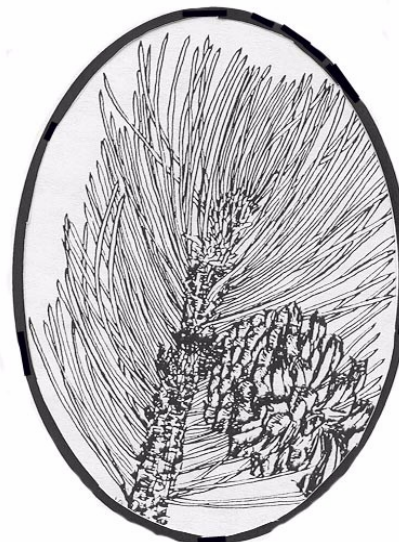
Sitka spruce



Western hemlock



Mountain hemlock



Shore pine



