



SOUTH PARK RANGER DISTRICT  
320 Hwy 285, P.O. Box 219, Fairplay, CO 80440  
(719) 836-2031



### ***CHRISTMAS TREE PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:***

**Q. Do I need a permit to cut a Christmas tree in the South Park Ranger District?**

**R. Yes, you must have a permit before you cut a Christmas tree and you must cut in a legal cutting area.**

**Q. When can I cut my Christmas tree?**

**R. Beginning October 10 through December 31. A physical permit must be in hand in order to cut.**

**Q. Where can I cut my Christmas tree?**

**R. In the South Park Ranger District of the Pike National Forest with the exception of: Jefferson Lake Recreation Area, Eleven Mile Canyon Recreation Area, Windy Ridge/ Bristlecone Pine Scenic Area, Buffalo Peaks and Lost Creek Wilderness Areas, developed campgrounds, other scenic areas or picnic grounds, or anywhere else that is specifically designated for no cutting.**

**Q. Are there other restrictions?**

**R. Tree trunks can be no more than 6" in diameter at ground level.  
Cut stumps 6" or less from ground.  
Permits must be visible on the tree as you leave the cutting area.  
Do not cut trees marked with paint.**

**Q. How do I know I'm on the National Forest?**

**R. Use a Pike National Forest map to make sure you are on National Forest Lands in the South Park Ranger District. There are private lands within the National Forest boundary and it is your responsibility to make sure you are on National Forest. If there is any doubt in your mind, utilize an app like Avenza that will show your location in relation to property boundaries, or find another area that is signed as National Forest.**

**Q. Are some areas better than others?**

**R. For those who are returning to the Denver area, we recommend the Lost Park area (main access County Road 56) or Michigan Creek area (main access County Roads 35 and 54). For those who like to cut their tree south of Fairplay, we recommend the Buffalo Springs Road (main access FDR 431), and Thompson Park (main access County Road 18). For those who cut in the southern end of the district, we recommend the National Forest south of Hwy 24 (County Roads 61 and 98). **PROBLEM AREAS** where trespass cutting has occurred are in the Boreas Pass area near Como, and the Alma area. If you cut your tree in these areas, more detailed maps or GPS may help. Since land ownership is patchy in these areas, it is better to avoid them altogether.**

**Q. What kind of tree makes the best Christmas tree?**

**R. Opinions vary on what tree is best. Here are some general guidelines:**

- a. Bristlecone pines Are NOT RECOMMENDED as a Christmas tree. The wood is very difficult to cut; the needles and cones are covered with sticky resin that will ruin your clothes, your vehicle, and your home, and create a fire hazard.**
- b. Ponderosa pines make fine Christmas trees, however their needles are very long and the cones have sharp bristles.**

- c. Some say that Douglas firs make the best Christmas trees because they have that pleasing Christmas tree shape and fullness. They also possess soft, silky needles that are neither too long nor too short.
- d. Lodgepole pines can also make a fine Christmas tree; however, some people claim they are too spindly.
- e. Spruces (Engelmann and Colorado Blue) are prized as beautiful Christmas trees; however, spruces have sharp pointed needles that some people find objectionable.
- f. Subalpine fir can be found at the higher elevations and make excellent trees; however they are not as prevalent as the other species.

**Q. I only have a 2-wheel drive vehicle. Is there any place I can go for my tree?**

**R. Four-wheel drive and 4WD with chains will get you deeper into the forest but some areas are accessible by 2WD. You may have to hike, snowshoe, or ski in to find the best trees though, since those close to easily accessible roads have been taken over the years. Make a fun day of hiking into the forest to find your tree, but don't get lost.**

**Q. What else do I need to know?**

**R. Dress warmly. Be prepared for changes in weather. Forest roads will not be plowed. We recommend you carry chains and/or use a 4WD vehicle. High clearance may also be necessary. Have a full tank of gas. Pack out your trash. Do not trespass on private property. Be sure to allow plenty of daylight time to find your tree; it gets dark by 4:30 as Christmas approaches.**

*Tip: A good place to look for a Christmas tree is beneath older stands of aspen. There are usually lots of Engelmann spruce growing in the shade of aspen stands.*

**PLEASE CONSULT THE MAP FOR THE BEST AREAS TO FIND AND CUT YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE. If you have further questions, please call the office at (719) 836-2031.**

*Remember us next year if you like the South Park Ranger District Christmas tree program.*

*We offer:*

- *district-wide tree cutting (with minimal prohibited areas)*
- *cutting dates from the week before Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve*
  - *more types of trees to choose from*
- *15%-off Christmas sale in our shop (November 29 - December 13 in 2024)*

***\*\*If you don't want to come all the way to Fairplay to buy your permit on the day you cut, you can send a mail-in request. Send check or money order (marked "Christmas Trees"), payable to USFS for \$20 per tree. We will mail the permit(s) out to you and you can cut your tree at your convenience during the allotted dates. Or you can purchase a permit online at [recreation.gov](https://recreation.gov) for an additional \$2.50 processing fee.***