

Greene County Agriculture and Natural Resource Newsletter



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Needles in a snowbank, finding the right species of Christmas tree

Farming cycles out of the spotlight after harvest, yet many families make their most calculated and celebrated plant purchase every winter. The Purdue Education Store contains digital and physical resources on a wide range of subjects. The publication are authored by experts on each topic, among them recently retired professor of forestry and natural resources, Daniel Cassens. He also served as the Extension wood products specialist.

This year, Cassens celebrates 40 years since he began operations at his tree farm in West Lafayette. Cassens Trees won the Indiana Grand Champion Tree contest for the third time in 2015. His expertise led Cassens to write *Selecting an Indiana-Grown Christmas Tree*, a publication available for free download from the Education Store. Much of the information below stems from the publication.

Source: Chad Campbell, Purdue Agriculture Web Communications Specialist

<i>Scotch Pine</i>	<i>Eastern White Pine</i>	<i>Douglas Fir</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Very easy to care for + Excellent needle retention + Holds heavy ornaments • Lasting pine smell • Most common species • Range of colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Better for allergies + Soft needles + Excellent needle retention • Little aroma • Popular • Blue to silver green - Weakest branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Soft needles • Fragrant • Popular • Short needles • Dark or blue green - Low branch strength - Lower needle retention than other traditional trees
<i>Fraser Fir</i>	<i>Blue Spruce</i>	<i>Norway Spruce</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Excellent needle retention + Uprturned branches for easy transport + Stiff branches + Extremely full • Fragrant • Short needles • Dark, silvery green - Fullness causes decorating to be limited to branch tips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Stiff branches + Natural symmetry • Pungent • Common landscaping or living Christmas tree • Unique blue color - Very sharp needles - Needs water quickly after cutting - Low needle retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Stiff branches • Pungent • Common tree in landscaping, wind breaking or as a living Christmas tree • Lighter green - Needs water quickly after cutting - Low needle retention
<i>Canaan Fir</i>	<i>Concolor (White) Fir</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Excellent needle retention • Fragrant • Very similar to Fraser Fir • Dark green • Short needles - Low branch strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Excellent needle retention + Stiff branches • Variety of colors • Citrus smell • Uncommon • Silvery blue 	





Spice Up Your Holidays

Some of the most popular spices used this time of year are harvested from various parts of exotic tropical plants, lending a special flavor to holiday recipes.

Ginger is harvested from the rhizomes (underground stems) of a tropical/sub-tropical herbaceous plant, *Zingiber officinale*. Ginger is native to tropical Asia and is grown commercially in Hawaii and many other countries, including China, India, Thailand and Brazil. The rhizomes are harvested after the first year of the plant's growth. The rhizomes can be washed and used fresh, dried whole or ground, pickled, crystallized or boiled and stored in syrup.

It is possible to grow ginger as a houseplant, though a typical home is not the best environment to keep this plant happy, especially in winter. The plant thrives in warm, humid air and well-drained moist soil. Select healthy fresh rhizomes from the market, and look for the small "eyes" or buds to plant eyes facing upward, about 2-3 inches deep. Once the leaves emerge, set the plant near a bright window where it will get at least a half day of direct sun.

The popular spice of cinnamon is derived from several closely related species. Ceylon cinnamon comes from the bark of the semi-tropical evergreen tree *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, native to Ceylon and southwest India and hardy in the U.S. Gulf

states. For the best quality cinnamon, the bark is cut in strips from two-year-old branches, just as the new foliage leaves out and the bark slips easily from the wood. The bark is then dried and either ground or sold in the curled strips called "quills." The quills of Ceylon cinnamon are light brown, and their interior consists of several thin layers.

The cinnamon found in most grocery stores is more likely to be the cassia cinnamon, harvested from the related *Cinnamomum aromaticum*. This type of cinnamon has a darker, thicker bark, and its quills are hollow. This form is less expensive, so it is more commonly found and is stronger in flavor than the true cinnamon.

Cloves are native to the Moluccas (Spice Islands) and are the dried, unopened flowers of the tropical evergreen tree *Syzygium aromaticum*. The name clove is derived from the Latin *clavus*, meaning "nail," as the dried flowers do rather resemble their namesake.

Nutmeg and mace are both harvested from the fruits of yet another tropical evergreen tree, *Myristica fragrans*, also native to the Moluccas. These fruits have a fleshy outer husk that splits upon ripening to reveal the seed with a red, leathery covering. Nutmeg is made from the ground seed kernel, while mace is made from the leathery seed cover.

Source: Rosie Lerner, Purdue Consumer Horticulturist

Hoosier wineries offer array of options for holiday wines

With over a hundred wineries throughout Indiana, Hoosiers should think locally when selecting their wines for Thanksgiving spreads. Jill Blume, enology specialist and a member of the Purdue Wine and Grape Team, said wineries have become so ubiquitous throughout the state that picking up a wine from a local winery is hassle-free.

"At this point, there are around 100 wineries in Indiana, so most people should be able to find one about a half hour from their home," Blume said.

Additionally, many wineries produce limited-edition wines to be enjoyed around the holidays. This month, for example, Huber's Winery is highlighting its Traminette wine as its light, fruity flavor pairs well with turkey and other Thanksgiving staples. The winery, based in Starlight, also releases a Christmas white wine, which boasts notes of peach, apple and citrus. Many other wineries around the state release holiday-themed wines, as well.

Around the holidays, Blume recommended sparkling wines from your regional Hoosier winery.

"Sparkling wines make an occasion feel more festive," Blume said. "I know there are a lot of great sparkling wines from Indiana wineries, like sparkling Catawba and sparkling Vignoles. There are even sparkling fruit wines that are really nice for folks not accustomed to drinking wine for the holidays."

Blume suggested red wine with meats and lighter rosés and whites with side dishes from cranberry salad to pumpkin pie. Rosés are versatile wines, Blume continued, that do well with most any meal. Blume's most important rule about holiday wine pairings?

"Drink what you like and try new things," she said.

A comprehensive list of Indiana's wineries can be found at <https://bit.ly/2BqBynO>.

Source: Emma E Ambrose, Purdue Agriculture Communication

New Resource for Identifying Common Yard and Garden Plants

Want to know more about common yard and garden plants? Meet the new Purdue Plant ID Pal.

The web-based resource is easy to use. 4-H and FFA youth will find it especially helpful as they learn to identify ornamentals, fruits, and vegetables for local, state and national competitions.

Purdue Plant ID Pal has four sections:

ornamentals (woody plants) **fruits and nuts**
flowers and indoor plants **vegetables**

You'll find more than 850 photos of nearly 200 plants, brief text descriptions and a glossary of botanical terms.

Each plant entry has multiple images, including close-ups of stems, leaves, flowers, fruit, and in some cases specialized plant structures that might aid in identification. For example, the iris entry includes an image of specialized underground stems called rhizomes.

Give the Purdue Plant ID Pal a try at: <http://purdue.ag/plant-id-pal>

Source: Rosie Lerner, Purdue Consumer Horticulturist



December Yard and Garden Calendar

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Check houseplant leaves for brown, dry edges, which indicates too little relative humidity in the house. Increase humidity by running a humidifier, grouping plants or using pebble trays.
- Extend the lives of holiday plants such as poinsettias and Christmas cactus by placing them in a cool, brightly lit area that is free from warm or cold drafts.
- Houseplants may not receive adequate light because days are short and gloomy. Move plants closer to windows, but avoid placing foliage against cold glass panes. Artificial lighting may be helpful.
- Because growth slows or stops in winter months, most plants will require less water and little, if any, fertilizer.
- If you are forcing bulbs for the holidays, bring them into warmer temperatures after they have been sufficiently precooled. Bulbs require a chilling period of about 10 to 12 weeks at 40 degrees F to initiate flower buds and establish root growth. Precooled bulbs are available from many garden suppliers, if you did not get yours cooled in time. Then provide two to four weeks of warm temperature (60 F), bright light and moderately moist soil to bring on flowers.
- When shopping for a Christmas tree, check for green, flexible, firmly held needles and a sticky trunk base – both indicators of freshness. Make a fresh cut, and keep the cut end under water at all times.
- Evergreens, except pines and spruce, can be trimmed now for a fresh supply of holiday greenery.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prevent bark splitting of young and thin-barked trees, such as fruit and maple trees. Wrap trunks with tree wrap, or paint them with white latex (not oil-based) paint, particularly on the south- and southwest-facing sides.
- Protect shrubs such as junipers and arborvitae from extensive snow loads by tying their stems together with twine. Carefully remove heavy snow loads with a broom to prevent limb breakage.
- Protect broadleaves, evergreens or other tender landscape plants from excessive drying (desiccation) by winter sun and wind. Canvas, burlap or polyethylene plastic screens to the south and west protect the plants. Similarly, shield plants from salt spray on the street side.
- Provide winter protection for roses by mounding soil approximately 12 inches high to insulate the graft union after plants are dormant and temperatures are cold. Additional organic mulch such as straw compost or chopped leaves can be placed on top.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- To protect newly planted or tender perennials and bulbs, mulch with straw, chopped leaves or other organic material after plants become dormant.
- Store leftover garden chemicals where they will stay dry, unfrozen and out of the reach of children, pets and unsuspecting adults.
- Once the plants are completely dormant and temperatures are consistently below freezing, apply winter mulch to protect strawberries and other tender perennials. In most cases, 2 to 4 inches of organic material such as straw, pine needles, hay or bark chips will provide adequate protection.
- Check produce and tender bulbs in storage, and discard any that show signs of decay, such as mold or softening. Shriveling indicates insufficient relative humidity.
- Clean up dead plant materials, synthetic mulch and other debris in the vegetable garden, as well as in the flowerbeds, rose beds and orchards.
- Make notes for next year's garden.

Source: Rosie Lerner, Purdue Consumer Horticulturist

Coyotes are active during winter season

Because winter can be a busy time for coyotes, DNR biologists say people can expect to see more of them in the coming months, but not to be alarmed.

"Most young coyotes leave their parents to start looking for new homes during winter. In addition, coyote breeding season starts in January, and coyotes may be more mobile during that time as well," said Megan Dillion, DNR south region urban biologist.

Coyotes are common to Indiana, including areas where people gather. It is normal for them to show up not only in rural environments, but also in urban areas.

"Coyotes thrive near people because they like to eat the rodents and rabbits that thrive near people, so seeing them in urban areas happens pretty regularly and is not unusual," said Geriann Albers, DNR furbearer biologist.

As a result, coyotes are an important part of Indiana's environment, helping to control rodent populations and cleaning up dead animals.

Coyotes' main diet consists of rodents and rabbits, but they will eat almost anything, including fruit, insects, pet food and garbage. That's why it's important to keep garbage secure, make sure pet food is not left outside and make sure fruit from trees is picked up.

"Coyotes may be attracted to bird feeders because mice and squirrels will hang around bird feeders. If you start seeing a coyote and you have bird feeders up, taking them down for a few weeks may encourage a coyote to move on," said Jessica Merkling, DNR north region urban biologist.

If you see a coyote and want it to go away, try to make it uncomfortable. Yell, wave your arms, spray it with a hose, or throw tennis balls or small stones—but don't throw anything that it may construe as food. Noisemakers such as a jar of coins or a small air horn can also scare away coyotes and are therefore good to carry when venturing out.

Never corner or chase a coyote. Make sure they always have a clear path to get away from you. Learn more about coyotes at wildlife.IN.gov/5688.htm.

Source: Marty Benson, Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Real Christmas Trees vs. Artificial

On average, an artificial tree is used for 7 years before it is disposed of. So if a tree is displayed for 1 month/year, it will have served as a Christmas tree a total of 7 months while remaining in a landfill indefinitely. Even if it were to be used



for 20 holiday seasons, it's still going to end up in a landfill far longer. Live Christmas trees, however, are both a renewable and biodegradable natural resource. On average it takes about 7 years to raise a Christmas tree to marketable size.

During that time, it is absorbing carbon dioxide and filtering the air of particulate matter and releasing oxygen. Live Christmas trees are also providing watershed protection and excellent habitat for songbirds and other wildlife.

Artificial trees are made primarily of metals and plastics, all non-renewable resources. The plastic material, typically polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is a potential source of lead. The potential for lead poisoning is considered high enough that California requires a warning label on all artificial trees made in China. The majority of artificial trees are made in China.

Learn more about the live trees, how to select them and how to keep a live tree fresh and safe at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/7561.htm>.

Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources

IBCA Annual Business Meeting and Convention

Registration for the 2019 Indiana Beef Cattle Association (IBCA) Annual Business Meeting and Convention is now open!

The IBCA Convention and Annual Business Meeting along with the Trade Show is set for Saturday, January 26, 2019. This event creates a unique, fun environment for Indiana cattle industry members to come together to network, create policy for the industry and to have some fun! If you're in the cattle business, then you need to be in Indianapolis in January.

Registration fee includes admission to all programs, snacks, lunch, dinner and the Las Vegas "Cow"sino Night Party. IBCA is excited to announce that for the 2019 annual convention, the Indiana Hereford, Simmental and Shorthorn Associations will be joining us for their annual business meetings.

The 2019 convention agenda can be found

<https://www.indianabeef.org/Media/INBeef/Docs/2019-convention-agenda-propo1sed.pdf>.

Nominations are currently being taken for 2018 IBCA Cattleman of the Year, Young Cattleman of the Year and IBCA Friend of the Beef Industry. Completed forms may be emailed to Callie at ccleveland@indianabeef.org or faxed to (317) 295-8421.

2018 IBCA Cattleman of the Year and Young Cattleman of the Year nomination forms are available at:

<https://www.indianabeef.org/Media/INBeef/Docs/2018-ibca-outstanding-cattlemen.pdf>.

Information on registration and convention details can be found on the IBCA website: <https://www.indianabeef.org/indiana-beef-cattle-association>.



2017 Indiana Farm Custom Rates Available

The rates reported in the 2017 Indiana Farm Custom Rates publication were compiled from questionnaires received from farmers, farm owners, farm custom operators, and professional farm managers in Indiana.

In Indiana, custom work is often done by farming neighbors after they complete their own work. In these situations, the custom operator may charge a custom rate that is well below the full cost of owning and operating their farm machinery either to build goodwill or to more fully utilize their machinery capacity. For that reason, readers of this publication should not interpret the average rates reported here as indicative of the total cost of completing these operations. Custom operators who do large amounts of custom work should estimate the full ownership and operating costs of their services before agreeing to work for the "going rate" in their area.

To view the publication, follow this link:

https://ag.purdue.edu/commercialag/Documents/Resources/Mangagement-Strategy/Crop-Economics/0517_Langemeier_Indiana_Farm_Custom_Rates.pdf.

Purdue's Center for Commercial Agriculture is conducting the survey once again this year. Individuals are asked to please report rates for custom work which they have charged others, or which they have paid during the past year. The survey includes the cost of hiring the machine with fuel and operator in all sections except the section which asks about machine rental rates. Individuals can return the questionnaire even if they answer only one question. Facts about their business are kept confidential, and used only in combination with similar reports. Response is voluntary, but farmers can perform a valuable price discovery service for themselves and others by replying to this survey.

To find the survey online, please use the link: <https://extension.purdue.edu/greene/article/31233> or request a copy by calling/emailing Sadie Davis at (812)659-2122, davis186@purdue.edu.

Source: Michael Langemeier, Purdue Agricultural Economist



Urban agriculture, soil biology highlight 2019 Indiana Small Farm Conference

From strategies that can strengthen Indiana farms to inspired ideas for urban agriculture across the state, the Purdue Extension Indiana Small Farm Conference connects producers on backroads and busy streets to expert information and to each other.

The 2019 conference and trade show will be held from Feb. 28 to March 2 at the Hendricks County 4-H Fairgrounds and Conference Complex, 1900 E. Main St., Danville, Ind. Registration for the conference is now open at purdue.ag/sfc.

"We're honored to have seen this conference become a premier destination for farmers and professionals over the last several years," says Tamara Benjamin, assistant program leader and diversified agriculture specialist with Purdue Extension and one of the conference's organizers. "There is no hard and fast definition of what the small-farm community looks like, and that's a great thing. Our programming reflects this diversity, and we enjoy being a hub where all people can gather to learn, network, and improve agriculture for Indiana and for the Midwest."

Two tours will be available: a butcher shop and livestock processing tour with Moody's Butcher Shop, Smoking Goose and more; and an agritourism farm tour encompassing Hunter's Honey Farm, Chandlers Orchard and

Country Market and Mallow Run Winery. There will be an additional cost to attend the agritourism farm tour.

Breakout sessions March 1-2 will cover a variety of topics, including food safety, farm management, value-added products like herbs and oils, pest control, price trends, poultry, high tunnels, marketing, infrastructure, disease management, policy and diversity.

Vendors will display a wide range of agricultural equipment, products and services during a trade show March 1 and 2 in the facility's exhibit hall.

For conference attendees registering before Feb. 4, admission is \$75 for one day, \$135 for two days and \$190 for three days. After Feb. 4, admission is \$90, \$162 and \$228.

Admission for children age 18 and younger is \$20, 35 and \$45 before Feb. 4 and \$24, \$42 and \$54 after Feb. 4.

One discounted registration fee for your plus-one – such as a spouse/partner or someone who works on your farm – is available at \$50, \$100 or \$140 before Feb. 4. Plus-one prices are \$60, \$120 or \$168 after Feb. 4. Any additional attendees beyond a plus-one pay for full admission.

For more information – or to sign up – visit the Indiana Small Farm Conference website at purdue.ag/sfc.

Source: Nick Rogers, Purdue Agriculture Communications

Crop advisor conference to offer ag professionals practical management info to boost knowledge, career growth

Program speakers include Purdue Extension specialists, Purdue College of Agriculture faculty and staff, and 20 educators and industry leaders from around the nation.

There will be 32 presentations in four simultaneous tracks that cover the main CCA performance objectives: nutrient management, soil and water management, pest management, and crop management. There is an additional special session this year with four presentations on organic crop production. All of the programs, with the exception of the specialty sessions on Dec. 18, will be offered twice daily so participants can attend sessions that are of the most interest and benefit to their professional growth.

CCAs can earn up to 16 continuing education units. Private Applicator Recertification Program credit will be available, and continuing certification hours for Indiana commercial pesticide applicators also will be available in multiple categories.

Conference registration, program information and hotel rates are available online by going to the Indiana CCA homepage at www.indianacca.org and clicking on the "CONFERENCE" link.

For CCAs the conference registration cost is \$225 for both days or \$125 for one day. For other participants, the cost is \$325 for both days and \$175 for one day. Registration prices will increase by \$25 after Dec. 15.

Certified crop advisers, consultants, farmers, agribusiness professionals and students will learn from top experts about crop, nutrient and pest management, and soil and water conservation during the 2018 Indiana Certified Crop Adviser Conference.

The conference, co-sponsored by Purdue Extension and the Indiana Certified Crop Adviser Program, will run daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Dec. 18 and 19 at the Indianapolis Marriott East, 7202 E. 21st St., Indianapolis.

Tony Vyn, a Purdue agronomy professor and one of the conference organizers, said the event is among the largest of its kind, drawing attendees from around the Midwest.

"The conference brings together in one place nationally recognized experts who share their research-based insights on important crop production issues," he said. "Our focus is both short-term and long-term as our 38 speakers will address new technologies, 2018 crop challenges, weather risks, and long-term healthy soil and clean-water initiatives.

"There are also opportunities to network with peers from Indiana and surrounding states, which, in and of itself, is a tremendous benefit of this annual event."

Source: Purdue Agriculture Communications

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Wishing you and your family all the best during this holiday season.

I am thankful for the opportunity to work with each of you and looking forward to another great year of programming in 2019.

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