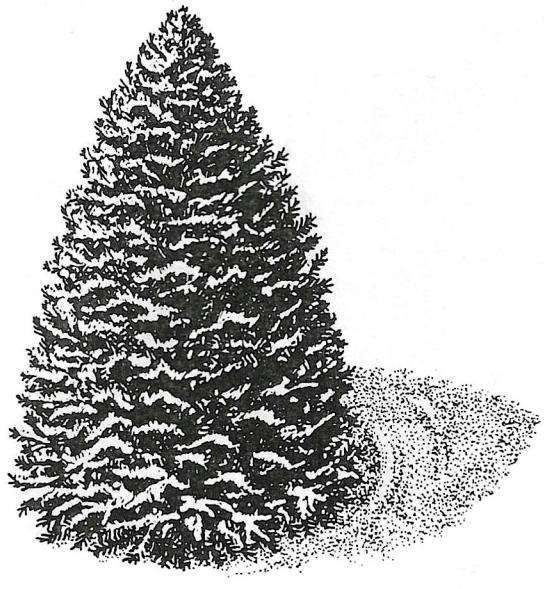
Christmas Trees

Christmas trees are another product of the forest and farm. The first commercial sale of Christmas trees occurred in New York City in the late 1700s. Today, Americans buy more than 35 million trees a year. More than half of the states in the U.S. produce Christmas trees as a crop. Most Christmas tree operations are small family farms with less than 40 acres of trees. For many growers, Christmas tree farming is a part-time occupation.

Pennsylvania Christmas tree growers harvest a variety of different species of trees, including Scots and eastern white pine; balsam, white, and Fraser fir; Douglas-fir; and white, Colorado blue, and Norway spruce.

Suitable land, money, knowledge, and time are key ingredients in a successful Christmas tree operation. Most trees take from seven to twelve years to grow to marketable size for use as Christmas trees. During that period, the grower constantly must be involved with the operation. The grower must clear the site and prepare it for planting; control weeds, by mowing or by using herbicides; shear trees to develop a desirable shape; and watch for insect and disease problems. The grower must be a businessperson, locating buyers for the Christmas trees. At harvest time, the trees must be cut, bundled, and shipped to the buyers. Many growers sell some trees directly to the consumer either already cut or as "cut-your-own." New trees must be planted to replace those cut.