



Sending Christmas Trees Overseas? Get the Paperwork Ball Rolling Now

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MADISON – If sending a real Wisconsin Christmas tree to a loved one serving overseas is on your to-do list, it's time to get started because you will need time for paperwork.

"You'll need a phytosanitary certificate, or phyto as we usually call it," says Greg Helmbrecht, a plant health specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "That tells the authorities in the nation where the tree is headed that it's not carrying insects or diseases that could infect plants there."

For trees sent by individuals or families to their active military duty family members overseas, DATCP will waive its portion of the usual \$50 fee. That will reduce the fee to \$6, which goes to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Here's what you need to do:

- Check with the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial shipper to find out the size, weight and pricing requirements, so you can buy the right size tree.
- Get your tree from a licensed Wisconsin Christmas tree grower who has a plant health certificate, and get a copy of the certificate. You might want to call the grower beforehand, to be sure that trees are for sale this early, and to ask whether the grower has a health certificate. Not all do.
- Call or email Helmbrecht to request a phyto certificate: greg.helmbrecht@wi.gov, 608-224-4596. Be sure to tell him that the tree is going to an active duty military family member overseas.
- When you receive the phyto certificate, take the tree to your shipper for packing or pack as directed by the shipper. Remember the certificate must go with the tree.

"Christmas tree growers tell us that soft-needled trees like balsams or Fraser firs ship best, and you should have the grower bundle the tree as tight as possible," Helmbrecht says. "And for best results, after the tree gets to its destination, cut a quarter to a half inch from the bottom of the tree trunk. Put it in water, and water it daily, the same as you would at home."

Wisconsin has more than 400 licensed Christmas tree growers. You can find the list online:

http://datcp.wi.gov/Plants/Christmas_Trees/index.aspx

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