

Christmas Trees Are Grown On Farms

*A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society
Learning Through Gardening program*

OVERVIEW: Do your students know where Christmas trees really come from? They are not cut from forests, they are grown on farms! This lesson teaches students about Christmas tree farming in New Jersey and also explains how coniferous trees are different from deciduous trees.



GRADES: K-5

OBJECTIVES: The student will be able to:

- Describe the process involved in growing Christmas trees.
- Describe how coniferous trees are different from deciduous trees.

MATERIALS:

The New Jersey Agricultural Society power point presentation *Christmas Trees Are Grown On Farms* available to download from the Learning Through Gardening Teacher Tool Box: <http://www.njagsociety.org/teaching-social-studies-in-the-garden.html>.

Optional:

Norway Spruce or Douglas Fir or other evergreen tree seeds

Seed starter soil

Black construction paper

Small plant pots or recycled containers such as milk or yogurt cartons with hole poked in the bottom for drainage

Small plastic baggies

PROCEDURE:

Ask students if they know where Christmas trees come from. Where do all those trees come from that you see in nurseries and stores in December? Explain that Christmas trees are not cut down in forests. They are grown on Christmas tree farms, including many in New Jersey.

Optional: Ask students to fill out the first two boxes of the graphic organizer *How Christmas Trees Are Grown (below)*.

Show the power point presentation *Christmas Trees Are Grown on Farms*, stopping periodically to ask questions and discuss information.

Optional: Plant some evergreen tree seeds to germinate in the classroom.

HOW TO PLANT EVERGREEN SEEDS

The best seeds to plant in the classroom are Norway Spruce or Douglas Fir seeds because they can be planted directly. Other evergreen tree seeds need special treatment or *stratification* before planting. Some seeds need a period of cold before they will sprout and some seeds need to be soaked in water. If you use a different variety of seed, be sure to research how to plant it ahead of time. You might be able to find some evergreen seeds from a local nursery or you can dissect closed pine cones and remove the seeds inside.

Fill small plant pots or recycled containers with soil. Seed starting soil is best, but if none is available, you could try using potting soil. Water the soil so that it is moist but not drenched. Place two or three seeds on top of the soil and barely cover them with soil, no more than 1/8-inch deep.

Cut squares of black construction paper that are about two inches bigger than the top of the container. Place each container in a warm place on top of a black square. The black square will absorb light and keep your seeds warmer. Place a plastic baggie over the top of each container.



The seeds should sprout in about 10 days. Remove the baggies when you see a sprout. Then place the pots on a windowsill or under a light. Be sure that the pots are kept warm.

Transplant the tree seedlings into a bigger pots filled with potting soil when they are 3-6 inches tall.

EVALUATION:

Completed *How Christmas Trees Are Grown* worksheet

Younger students can draw pictures showing how an evergreen tree grows.

Older students can write a paragraph or essay about how Christmas trees are farmed or how coniferous trees are different from deciduous trees.

EXTENSIONS:

Read a book about Christmas tree farming:

For grades K-2: *Christmas Tree Farm* by Ann Purcell

For grades 3-5: *Christmas Farm* by Mary Lyn Ray. This book is full of math problems for older students. Wilma and her young helper Parker order 62 dozen evergreen seedlings to start a Christmas tree farm. Year after year, the pair nurture their trees, keeping careful count of how many perish and how many grow into fine, full Christmas trees.

See lesson plans for both books in the Learning Through Gardening Teacher Tool Box.

Visit a local Christmas tree farm or invite a local Christmas tree farmer to the classroom to talk to students.

New Jersey Learning Standards

Science: *K: LS1.C* *1: LS1.A* *2:LS2.A* *3:LS1.B* *4:LS1.A* *5:LS2.A*

Social Studies: *K-2:6.1.2.Geo.GI.1, 6.1.2.EconEM.1,2; 6.1.2.EconNE.1*
3-5:6.1.5.GeoHE.2, 6.1.5.EconEM.1, 2; 6.1.5.EconNM.4, 6

Name _____

How Christmas Trees Are Grown

What I Know

What I Want to Know

What I Learned

What Surprised Me