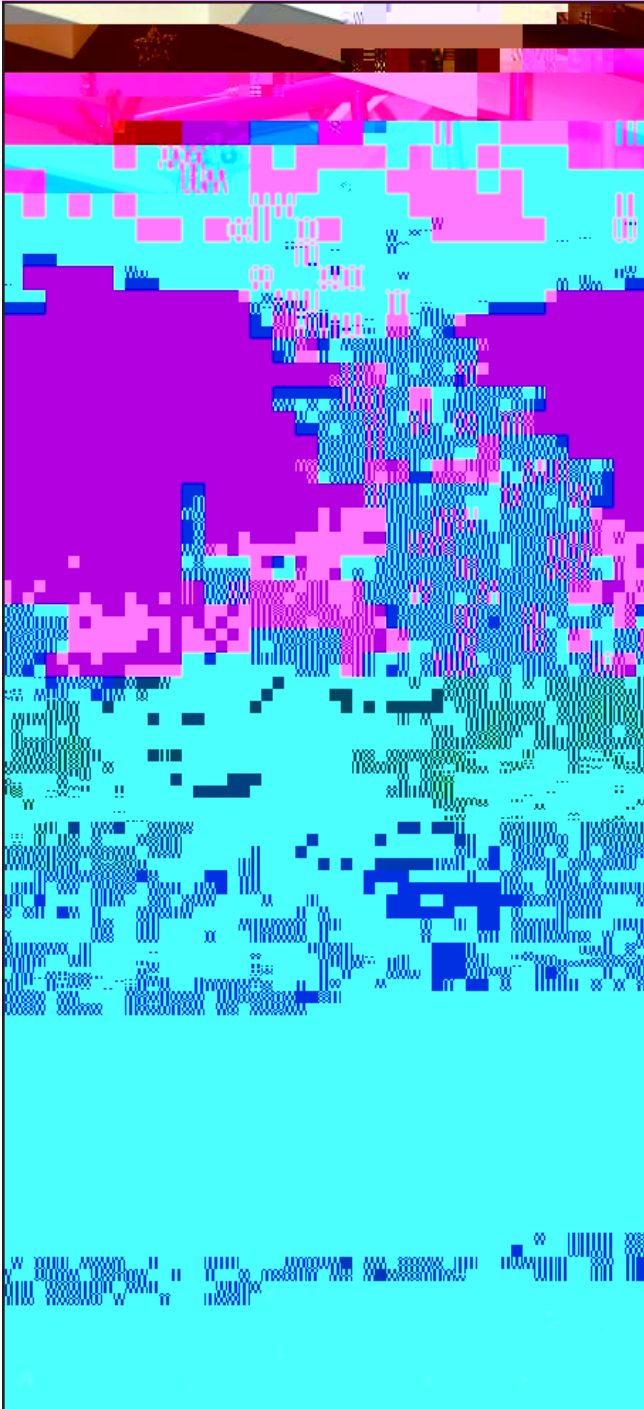


Alternative Forest Enterprises No. 8



*This beautiful Christmas tree is a subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) from the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.*

Chris Schnepf

For those who want a real Christmas tree, fresher is better. For some, a fresh, real tree means a trip to the woods, but forest-grown trees aren't your only choice for a fresh-cut tree. "U-cut" Christmas tree farms are usually closer to town and have a variety of species to choose from.

But if going to the woods is part of your Christmas tradition, you won't necessarily hurt the forest by cutting a Christmas tree. In fact, cutting the right tree can help the forest!

First, determine where to find the tree. Sometimes people presume everywhere they see forest trees is public forestland. Statewide, the largest portion of Idaho's forests are federal, but that may not be mirrored in your locality. For example, in several northern Idaho counties, the largest portion of forest land is owned by family forest owners. Different ownerships are frequently intermingled, so be sure to get permission and maps, so you know whose land you are cutting a tree from. Public agencies and timber companies commonly have a permit system for cutting Christmas trees on forests they manage.

Most agencies also have policies as to which trees you can cut; but there are additional factors to consider in choosing your tree. For example, fire exclusion and selective harvesting have produced much more fire than our forests had historically. As a result, our forests often have more problems with root disease and defoliators. Fortunately, grand fir, subalpine fir (both known as "true firs"), and Douglas-fir are very popular Christmas tree species.



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