

# Madison County Agriculture News



Madison County Extension  
184 NW College Loop \* Madison \* FL \* 32340  
850-973-4138

The Foundation for The Gator Nation  
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## A note from your Agent . . .

With the holiday season approaching fast upon us workshops have slowed down and everyone is wrapping up the end of the year.

I have included within this month's newsletter some information regarding Christmas trees for those of you that put a Christmas tree up in or outside of your home.

Please remember to either cover or bring in your potted plants during these colder temperatures so that they don't freeze overnight. You can also cover your smaller younger trees with old sheets, blankets, towels or garbage bags to keep them from freezing.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call the Madison County Extension Office at 973-4138 .

## Events To Remember...More Detail Inside About Events

### December 2008

**Thursday 25th** - Christmas Day - OFFICED CLOSED

**Friday 26th** - OFFICE CLOSED

### Year 2009:

**January 1st** - New Year's Day - OFFICE CLOSED

**January 19th** - Martin Luther King Day - OFFICE CLOSED

**February 4th** - Crop Management School

**February 16th—19th** - Madison County Livestock Show & Sale

## December 2008

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For meetings sponsored by Madison County Extension Office: Individuals with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please call 850-973-4138 at least five (5) working days before the meeting, so proper consideration can be given the request.

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## Beef Management Tips

- ⤴ Begin grazing small grain pastures (if ready)
- ⤴ Continue monitoring mineral feeders to make sure they don't go empty
- ⤴ Check and treat for external parasites if needed
- ⤴ Check cows frequently for any calving difficulties
- ⤴ Tag calves at birth - record birth dates, tag numbers and cow ID
- ⤴ Feed requirements increase about 10-15% during last 30-45 days prior to calving, therefore do not underfeed
- ⤴ Do a complete review of management plan and update for next year



## Lawn and Garden Tips

Some cool season plants to plant now that will display colors in the garden include the following:

- ✓ Petunias
- ✓ Pansies
- ✓ Shasta Daisies
- ✓ Snapdragons

Herbs to plant during this cool season are the following:

- ✓ Coriander
- ✓ Comfrey
- ✓ Garlic
- ✓ Parsley

- ✓ Sage
- ✓ Thyme
- ✓ Dill
- ✓ Fennel

For your vegetable garden it is recommended that you plant the following:

- ✓ Beets
- ✓ Broccoli
- ✓ Cabbage
- ✓ Carrots
- ✓ Radishes
- ✓ English Peas

Temperature, light, and

humidity are keys to insuring that indoor plants will thrive.

Continue to watch for Brown Patch Fungus Disease in your lawns. If you have questions or concerns please contact your local Agriculture Agent.



## Christmas Tree Facts

1. There are approximately 25-30 million Real Christmas Trees sold in the U.S. every year.
2. There are close to half a billion Real Christmas Trees currently growing on Christmas Tree farms in the U.S. alone, all planted by farmers.
3. For every Real Christmas Tree harvested, up to 3 seedlings are planted in its place the following spring.
4. There are about 500,000 acres in productions for growing Christmas Trees in the U.S.; much of it preserving green space.
5. It can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree typical height (6-7 feet) or as little as 4 years, but the average growing time is 7 years.
6. The top selling Christmas Trees are: Balsam Fir, Douglas-Fir, Fraser Fir, Noble Fir, Scotch Pine, Virginia Pine and White Pine.

Source: National Christmas Tree Association, 2008

## Tips On Selecting A Tree At A Retail Lot

- ✂ Be sure you know what size (height and width) you need before heading to the retail lot.
- ✂ Know what species you want before heading to the retail lot.
- ✂ go to a retail lot that is well lit and stores trees in a shaded area.
- ✂ Consumers should ask the retailer when they get the trees: are they delivered once at the beginning of the season, or do they obtain several shipments during the season.
- ✂ Do a freshness test on the trees. Green needles on fresh trees break crisply when bent sharply with the fingers — much like a fresh carrot.
- ✂ Pines have different indicators because of the fibrous nature of their needles compared to firs. The needles on fresh pines do NOT break, unless they are very dry.
- ✂ Look for other indicators of dryness or deterioration: excessive needle loss, discolored foliage, musty odor, needle pliability, and wrinkled bark. A good rule-of-thumb is, when in doubt about the freshness of a tree, select another one. If none of the trees on the lot look fresh go to another lot.
- ✂ Some species last longer and remain fresh longer than others in different climates. Ask your retailer which tree performs best in your climate.
- ✂ Involve the whole family in the selecting and plan fun things for everyone to do during the trip.



Source: National Christmas Tree Association, 2008

## How To Care For Your Real Christmas Tree

- ◇ Displaying trees in water in a traditional reservoir type stand is the most effective way of maintaining their freshness and minimizing needle loss problems.
- ◇ Make a fresh cut to remove about a 1/2-inch thick disk of wood from the base of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Make the cut perpendicular to the stem axis. Don't cut the trunk at an angle, or into a v-shape, which makes it far more difficult to hold the tree in the stand and also reduces the amount of water available to the tree.
- ◇ To display the trees indoors, use a stand with an adequate water holding capacity for the tree. **As a general rule, stands should provide 1 quart of water per inch of stem diameter.** Devices are available that help maintain a constant water level in the stand.
- ◇ Use a stand that fits your tree. Avoid whittling the sides of the trunk down to fit a stand. The outer layers of wood are the most efficient in taking up water and should not be removed.
- ◇ Keep displayed trees away from sources of heat (fireplaces, heaters, heat vents, direct sunlight). Lowering the room temperature will slow the drying process, resulting in less water consumption each day.
- ◇ Check the stand daily to make sure that the level of water does not go below the base of the tree. **With many stands, there can still be water in the stand even though the base of the tree is no longer submerged in water.**
- ◇ Always inspect light sets prior to placing them on the tree. If worn, replace with a new set.
- ◇ Always turn off the tree lights when leaving the house or when going to bed.

