

Los Angeles Times | BUSINESS

LOCAL U.S. & WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION MORE

Search GO

MONEY & CO. TECHNOLOGY PERSONAL FINANCE SMALL BUSINESS COMPANY TOWN JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

IN THE NEWS: CLIMATE TALKS | HEALTHCARE | JOHN PEREZ | ARTURO BELTRAN LEYVA | COLTS | TWITTER HACKED

SAAB move your mind™

0% APR FOR 72 MO.
FOR QUALIFIED BUYERS*
on the '09 Saab Family



FIND YOUR SAAB DEALER ▶

*Monthly payment is \$13.89 for every \$1,000 you finance. Example down payment: 11.1%. Some customers will not qualify. Take delivery by 1/4/10. Not available with other offers. See dealer for details.

Dilemma for a green Christmas: Real or plastic?

Manufacturers of real and artificial firs both tout theirs as environment-friendly. One study favors live-cut trees, saying artificial ones would have to be reused 11 years to be the better choice.

1 2 [next](#) | [single page](#)



Nasir Mia, right, helps a customer at Tina Callas's tree lot in Sherman Oaks. Some environmentalists say live-cut trees have smaller carbon footprints than artificial trees. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times / December 17, 2009)

as of 01:30PM ET 12/18/2009

DJIA	10323 +14.74
NASDAQ	2206.33 +26.28
S&P500	1100.42 +4.34

QUOTE: Symbol or Name

advertisement



JAL

A brand new Japan Airlines
New B777-300ER service
from Chicago/Los Angeles to Tokyo

Refined. Redefined.

The Latest | NEWS AS IT HAPPENS

Snoop Dogg plus Martha Stewart plus brownies equals moments of pure televised joy - *Ministry of Gossip* 12/18/2009, 10:10 a.m.

The Deal: Inexpensive garden gifts along Abbot Kinney - *Home & Garden* 12/18/2009, 10:06 a.m.

Will the violent death of Mexican drug lord Arturo Beltran Leyva bring more bloodshed? - *La Plaza* 12/18/2009, 9:58 a.m.

Democrats' 2010 weapon: George W. Bush - *Top of the Ticket* 12/18/2009, 9:49 a.m.

Motorist who led authorities on a chase through three counties is apprehended near Mexican border - *L.A. Now* 12/18/2009, 9:39 a.m.

RELATED



Artificial trees

By Jerry Hirsch and Martin Zimmerman
December 18, 2009

E-mail Print Share Text Size

Artificial or fresh-cut live trees? That may be a dilemma this year for environment-minded shoppers hoping for a green Christmas.

Tree sellers have made dueling pitches this season, each extolling the environmental benefits of their trees, and the choice may be a puzzler. Some shoppers are ignoring both, going instead for living trees in pots.

Many factors go into a Christmas tree purchase, including family tradition, price and ease of care. But increasingly, environmental concerns are also part of the equation.

ADS BY GOOGLE

Before You Install Solar
You Should Consider Fuel Cells. 11x More Productive. Faster Payback
www.ClearEdgePower.com

Luxury Christmas Trees
Pre-Lit Artificial Christmas Trees with Lifelike Branches - from \$399
www.Frontgate.com

MOST VIEWED | MOST E-MAILED

The environmental pitches this year come at time when Christmas tree sales of all types are being battered by a tough national economy. ISI Group, a New York research firm, notes that sales are up slightly over last year, but the gains have shrunk each week since Thanksgiving.

The American Christmas Tree Assn. -- the trade group for the artificial manufacturers -- says a study it sponsored shows that its trees have a smaller carbon footprint than live trees cut for the holidays.

That is based on the assumption that these artificial Christmas trees are kept in use for at least 10 years. However, the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Assn. -- representing the live-cut tree guys -- notes that "real" Christmas trees reduce carbon emissions by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen as they grow, and that they are renewable. Growers plant one or more trees to replace every tree they harvest.

Bill and Anna Hory of Manhattan Beach decided the best way to be green was to do neither. Instead they rented a 3-foot living tree in a pot from the Living Christmas Co. of Redondo Beach.

"For \$70, they drop it off and pick it up, and we can get the same tree every year, so it can grow with our kids," said Bill Hory. The couple has three children under the age of 5.

"It's hard for us to rationalize buying a real tree and throwing it away every year. We are not green freaks, but we are trying to be more concerned about our decisions regarding the environment," he said.

Mike Bondi, a professor of forestry at Oregon State University, said that there haven't been any life cycle studies in the U.S. comparing the carbon footprints, or greenhouse gas emissions, of real and artificial Christmas trees.

Bondi said that there is one study that looked at the amount of carbon fixed within a live tree through its life cycle, but the findings were still preliminary at this point and it did not measure or compare carbon emissions from real and artificial trees.

The average tree absorbs about 20 pounds of carbon, but that doesn't address the issue of how much carbon is used to farm the tree, ship it to a retailer and dispose it after the holiday, Bondi said.

Bondi, who has 7-foot noble fir tree in his home this Christmas, discounted the findings of the artificial tree study.

"The study by the American Christmas Tree Assn. is not a peer-reviewed scientific study. We tried to get our hands on the data, and they wouldn't share the information," he said.

The study was conducted by PE Americas, an environmental consulting firm, and was also "preliminary," said Jami Warner, executive director of the Los Angeles-based trade group. She said the association plans to release the details of a more comprehensive study by next Christmas.

The [Carbon Trust](#), an independent nonprofit company set up by the British government to accelerate that nation's move to a low-carbon economy, recommends that people buy real trees. Typically, they have much lower carbon footprints than artificial Christmas trees, the trust said.

But, the British group pointed out in a statement, artificial trees would be the more environment-friendly choice if they are reused for at least 11 years. That's because the carbon emissions from making and selling one artificial tree about equals that from growing and cutting 11 real trees, according to the group's estimates.

Real trees have the smallest carbon footprint when they are chipped and used in a garden after the holiday is over rather than being shipped off to a landfill, the trust said.

According to the National Christmas Tree Assn, which represents growers, 28.2 million real trees were sold last year compared with 11.7 million artificial trees.

Real trees tend to be less expensive. On Home Depot's website, a 7-foot fresh-cut Fraser fir costs \$129, a 5-footer is \$100. But real trees can make allergies flare and sometimes create a mess when the needles shed.

GM to shutter Saab after sale talks fail

Iranians seize Iraqi oil well, Iraqi officials report

California's unemployment rate drops slightly

GM to discontinue Saab after deal talks collapse

Twitter briefly blocked; 'Iranian Cyber Army' claims responsibility

In Copenhagen, Obama urges action

Trojans to stick with the playbook

More homes are poised to hit the market

Jennifer Jones Simon gave new life to husband's museum

Dilemma for a green Christmas: Real or plastic?



SAFE + SOUND

THE LOWEST COST OF OWNERSHIP OF ANY LUXURY BRAND

2010 VOLVO XC60

Lease it now for
\$435 per month for 36 months

STARTING AT \$33,845
MSRP

GET DETAILS >

STUDY INCLUDES
SAFE + SOUND PROGRAM
ANALYSIS, BASED 2009MY.

VOLVO

Gadget Guide »

Tech reviews and news from Times partner IDG.



Hands on with Apple TV 3.0

- 5 new technologies that will change everything
- Google updates Google Earth

app for iPhone

• Pocket HD camcorders buying guide

Happiest State »



ADS BY GOOGLE

Before You Install Solar

You Should Consider Fuel Cells. 11x More Productive. Faster Payback

www.ClearEdgePower.com

Luxury Christmas Trees

Pre-Lit Artificial Christmas Trees with Lifelike Branches - from \$399

www.Frontgate.com



Louisiana is the happiest state, according to a study published in Science. California ranked a distant 46th.

- E-mail
- Print
- Digg
- Twitter
- Facebook
- StumbleUpon
- Share

Alabama's Homeboys »



Former gang members help youths battle fear and a seemingly dead-end future.

COMMENTS (0) | Add Comment

In Case You Missed It...



Companies fall short in ads for healthy foods for kids



Notable deaths 2009: Their stories moved us



Fear creeps in for residents of Station Fire burn area



State's earthquake warning system gets major upgrade



Rainey: News website pins its hopes on tweens

News

- Local
- U.S. & World
- Business
- Technology
- Sports
- Opinion
- Columnists
- Obituaries

Entertainment

- Television
- Movies
- Music
- Arts & Culture
- Celebrity
- The Envelope
- Calendar
- Company Town
- TV Listings
- Movie Listings
- Tickets

Living

- Travel
- Health
- Food
- Home
- Image
- Magazine
- Books
- Autos
- Hot List
- Horoscopes
- Crosswords

Multimedia

- Video
- Photos
- Data Desk
- Your Scene
- Times on Twitter
- RSS
- Newsletters
- Kindle
- E-edition

Top Blogs

- L. A. Now
- Fabulous Forum
- Politics
- TV Show Tracker
- Music
- Technology
- Ministry of Gossip
- Company Town
- Lakers
- Travel & Deals

More

- Corrections
- Readers' Rep
- Contact Us | Help
- About Us
- Events
- LATMG Media Kit
- Print Edition
- Subscribe
- Manage My Account
- Site Map

Coastline Pilot | Daily Pilot | Huntington Beach Independent | Valley Sun | Burbank Leader | News Press | KTLA | Hoy | Brand X | LA. Los Angeles Times Magazine | ZAP2it |

Baltimore Sun | Chicago Tribune | Daily Press | Hartford Courant | Los Angeles Times | Orlando Sentinel | Sun Sentinel | The Morning Call | Terms of Service | Privacy Policy | Los Angeles Times, 202 West 1st Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012 | Copyright 2009

A Tribune Web site