

Column Name – The Heartland Minute

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*“Burn It or Show It Off: Choosing Firewood and Your Christmas Tree”*

According to Kansas State University Horticulture Expert, Ward Upham, not all firewood is created equal. The wood from some tree species produces more heat than others. High on the list are red, bur and post oak species, which produce a heat value of 25 (measured in millions of British Thermal Units, or BTU’s). In the many common types of firewood, only Osage Orange (32.6), honeylocust (25.6) and black locust (28.3) rate higher than oaks.

However, Osage Orange is not always the best choice due to its tendency to spark, and as such, should not be used in an open fireplace. Black locust can be difficult to split. Many elm varieties and hackberry rate high (all around 20) but elm can be difficult to split, as well. According to Upham, the Kansas Forest Service publication, “Managing Your Woodland for Firewood,” is a helpful resource for those interested in growing and harvesting firewood.

For homeowners, it is advised to buy firewood locally to prevent the spread of pests such as the Emerald Ash Borer, an exotic beetle that has devastated tens of millions of ash trees in 30 states, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Emerald Ash Borer, which began in the Northern United States, has spread in Kansas primarily because of firewood.

Now for those who wish to display their “firewood,” let us talk about things to keep in mind when choosing and caring for a live Christmas tree. Upham has a few signs to watch for that indicate a cut Christmas tree should be avoided. First off, watch out for needles that are dull, grayish-green color. Next, if the needles fail to ooze pitch when broken apart and squeezed. The needles should not feel stiff and brittle. Finally, the needles should not pull easily off the tree.

Once you get a suitable tree home, recut the trunk one inch above the original cut to open clogged, water-conducting tissues. Then, place the trunk in warm water. Also, remember to locate the tree in as cool a spot as possible, away from fireplaces, wood-burning stoves and heating ducts. Keep the reservoir in the tree stand filled with water.

Now you can get out there to cut that firewood, pick your Christmas tree, get that fireplace going, pull out the Christmas decorations, and enjoy the Holiday Season!

Happy Holidays everyone!

Information from article from Kansas State University Horticulture Expert, Ward Upham.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.