

Chit Chat

News for Home and Living

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Christmas Trees -- How It All Got Started

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition, as we now know it, in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and added lighted candles to its branches.

Some people trace the origin of the Christmas tree to an even earlier period. Even before the Christian era, trees and boughs were used for ceremonials. Egyptians, in celebrating the winter solstice -- the shortest day of the year -- brought green date palms into their homes as a symbol of "life triumphant over death". When the Romans observed the feast of Saturn, part of the ceremony was the raising of an evergreen bough. Early Scandinavians were said to have paid homage to the fir tree.



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Most 19th-century Americans found Christmas trees an oddity. The first record of one being on display was in the 1830s by the German settlers of Pennsylvania.

By the 1890s, Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany, and Christmas tree popularity was on the rise around the U.S. It was noted that Europeans used small trees about four feet in height, while Americans liked their Christmas trees to reach from floor to ceiling.

The early 20th century saw Americans decorating their trees mainly with homemade ornaments, while the German-American sect continued to use apples, nuts, and marzipan cookies. Electricity brought about Christmas lights, making it possible for Christmas trees to glow for days on end. With this, having a Christmas tree in the home became an American tradition.

Wishing you all the good things this season brings!

-- Tara and April

All About Reindeer (Caribou)

Caribou inhabit the far northern regions of North America, Europe, and Asia. An almost pure-white subspecies lives in northern Greenland. In North America, the woodland caribou is found in Canada and Alaska in swampy forest habitats. Farther north, the northern, or barren ground, caribou roam the desolate Arctic tundra. Their original range included northern Maine and Minnesota as well as the Rocky Mountain region of Idaho and Wyoming. The last natural band south of Canada disappeared from Isle Royale, Michigan, in the 1920s.



In Europe, caribou are called reindeer, but in Alaska and Canada only the domestic forms are called reindeer. All caribou and reindeer throughout the world are considered to be the same species, but there are seven subspecies.



Caribou have thicker bodies and shorter legs than do most deer. Their hooves are broad, their coats are brown, and they have white tails, necks, and sides. The colors vary with the seasons, as do those of many other deer, becoming lighter in color during winter. Those in the northernmost parts of their range may be almost white. Both sexes have large, irregularly branching antlers, though those of the female are somewhat smaller and more slender. The males also reach larger sizes, with some reaching weights of more than 700 pounds and shoulder heights of up to 4.6 feet.

Caribou are gregarious and migratory. They move continually, migrating in herds that travel south for the winter and north in summer. In the warmer months they can be found in the farthest northern reaches of the Arctic tundra. Like most herd animals, they must keep moving to find adequate food. Large herds often migrate long distances between summer and winter ranges while smaller herds may not migrate at all. In summer, caribou eat the leaves of willows, sedges, flowering tundra plants, and mushrooms. They switch to lichens (reindeer moss), dried sedges (grass-like plants), and small shrubs (like blueberry) in September. When alarmed, caribou break into a clumsy gallop, changing to a steady trot that carries them across the tundra. Their large, spreading hooves, with sharp cup-shaped edges, give them a firm footing on the soft, mucky surface of the tundra as well as winter's ice and snow.

Reindeer are the most domesticated of the deer. In the region of Lapland in northern Europe, they have been domesticated for many centuries, where they provide meat, milk, clothing, and transportation. They are used both to pull sleds and to carry burdens and riders. Until recently, the Laplanders were completely dependent upon the reindeer for their livelihood, and followed the herds on their annual migrations.



Reindeer Trivia

- The first reindeer to be born in the U.S. arrived on May 31, 1929, in North Beverly, Massachusetts.
- A reindeer can travel 40 miles a day, pulling twice its own weight on a sled.
- Montgomery Ward introduced Rudolph, the 9th reindeer, on December 25, 1939.
- Songwriter Johnny Marks wrote *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. It appeared on the music charts on November 25, 1949, and became THE musical hit of the holiday season. Although Gene Autry's rendition is the most popular, 80 different versions of the song have been recorded, with nearly 20,000,000 copies sold.
- January 20th is Reindeer Day.



Happy Holidays
from
"The Sister Team"

Wishing each and every one of
you
a most joyous and healthy
holiday season!

Warmest regards,
Tara and April



Welcome New Clients!

Here are some of the new clients who became members of our "Real Estate Family" recently. We'd like to welcome you and wish you all the best!

Patrick Sheehan (referred by Shawn & Lisa Sheehan, treasured clients)

Erich and Stephani List (selling a home in the "Wood Streets")

Dave and Shirley Goesen (referred by Arthur Kinzli)

Vivian Ashley (referred by Arthur Kinzli)

We love giving recognition to our new friends and our wonderful existing clients who are kind enough to refer their friends and relatives to us.

December Quiz Question

What are the names of Santa's 8 flying reindeer, *not* including Rudolph?

Everyone responding by calling or e-mailing us with the correct answer will be entered into a drawing for:

**A 2004
Entertainment
Coupon Book**

*Drawing to be held
on 1/05/04*



October Quiz Answer

Question: Mount Kilimanjaro is located in which country?

Answer: Mount Kilimanjaro is located at the northeastern tip of Tanzania.

Source: www.tanzania-web.com/mtkil/home.htm

Congratulations to Melanie Worthington

Your name was selected at random from all of the correct quiz entries and you'll receive a \$30 gift certificate to a store of your choice!

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The Pet Page

HOLIDAY SAFETY FOR CATS

The holiday season is a time for celebration, but can also be a time of trouble for your family cat(s)! For example, mistletoe and artificial snow are poisonous; Christmas ornament fragments can perforate the stomach; string, ribbon and tinsel, if swallowed, may cause painful intestinal problems; frayed light cords cause shock or burns. Don't spoil your holiday with a medical emergency.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR WINTER

It is best to keep pets indoors during the winter months, but if this is not possible, outdoor pets must be provided with shelter. Their home should be elevated off the ground to prevent moisture accumulation and have a door of some kind to keep out winter winds and rain. Shelters should be insulated or heated. Water sources may be heated to permit constant access to unfrozen water; thermal units designed specifically for this purpose are readily available. Outdoor pets require extra calories to keep warm; feed your pet according to its needs when the temperature drops. In severely cold or inclement weather, no pet should be kept outside. Indoor pets should have sleeping quarters in a draft-free, warm area with their bed or mattress elevated slightly off the floor.



ROAMING PETS AND/OR WILDLIFE

Roaming cats, as well as other house pets and wildlife, may climb onto vehicle engines for warmth during cold weather. Be sure to check under the hood before starting your vehicle and honk the horn to startle any animals seeking shelter inside.



REMEMBER....

Spaying and neutering is the most important thing we can do to help dogs and cats.

"The Sister Team" is willing and able to confidentially help those who are unable to spay or neuter their companion (or stray) animals.

Please contact us and we will donate our time and money to this most-important cause!

--Tara and April

OTHER HOLIDAY CONCERNS

If you plan to take your pet with you during holiday visits, make sure that your pet is welcome first (with all the activity, it may be better to board your pet or hire a pet sitter). Holiday treats, such as rich, fatty food scraps, bones from fish, pork, and poultry, alcoholic beverages, and chocolate, can be harmful or toxic to pets. If you want to decorate your pet, invest in a holiday collar. These last for many years, are more attractive, and are a lot safer!

Together, Forever and Always.....for the Animals!

-- Tara and April

Preferred Service Directory

Below are some hard-working, reliable people/companies that we highly recommend:

Tutoring Service in the "Woods"
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Save \$\$\$ – Turn Off Your Computer

Is it better to turn off your computer when not using it, or leave it on all the time? It depends on how you use your computer. Here are two situations that force you to leave your computer on 24 hours a day:

- You are on a network, and the network administrators back up files and/or upgrade software over the network at night. If that's the case, and you want your machine backed up or upgraded, then you need to leave it on all the time.
- You are using your machine as some sort of server, and it needs to be on 24 hours a day. If your machine acts as a file server, print server, Web server, etc., on a LAN (local area network) or the Internet, then you need to leave it on all the time.

If neither applies, then you have a choice about whether or not to power off. One reason to unplug is economic. A typical PC consumes around 300 watts. That's about 60 cents per day (based on an hourly rate of 10 cents per kilowatt). Added up, that comes to about \$219 per year. Even if you have your computer go into a powered-down standby mode, you're still wasting about \$100 per year.

– Adapted from HowStuffWorks.com



Lots And Lots Of Lip Gloss

The average woman uses more than 60 pounds of lip gloss in her lifetime, so it's no surprise that there are so many different flavors from which to choose. You've got gloss that tastes like Reese's, Blow Pops, Dots, Bubble Yum and even Tootsie Rolls. The bottom line is that lip gloss has surpassed lipstick in terms of popularity. That would explain the 40% growth in gloss sales in the last year, proving that even in a recession, people still want a pretty pucker.



– Adapted from *The Denver Post*

Do Men Gossip?

According to a study from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, men dish out just as much gossip as women. While the reasons behind gossip are multiple, the #1 factor is that it increases intimacy between the person spreading the gossip and the person soaking it all in. In other words, a bond is created. But according to the study, swapping stories creates even greater bonds among men than it does with women.



– Adapted from *Self*



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Chit Chat

Referral Reward Program ...

We want to thank those of you who have participated in our Client Referral program! Marketing for new clients costs us tons of time, money and energy. Like any company, we need new clients to stay in business. Over the years we've found that looking for new clients takes away from the time we would rather be spending focusing on your goals, explaining your options, and providing the excellent service you expect.....*and deserve!*

If you refer your friends and relatives to us, everyone benefits. We can serve you better. We send you a nice gift. And we assure you that we'll take the very best care of anyone you refer to us.

If you want any friends, coworkers, relatives or business acquaintances to receive a free subscription to this newsletter, please contact us and we'll put them on the mailing list immediately.

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