



## **O Christmas Tree**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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I happened to go into a large retail store recently and was absolutely shocked by the extremely long wall that was stocked from floor to ceiling with artificial Christmas trees. Sizes ranged from those suitable for desktops or apartments all the way up to those that were well over nine feet in height. Choices included spruce, pine, fir and even some that appeared to have freshly fallen snow on the branches. Shoppers could choose green, white, silver or even purple. Some trees had lights, fiber optics or optional attachments to hang them upside down from the ceiling. The rows and rows and rows of decorations and accessories was overwhelming!

I remember the Christmas trees that we had in our youth. Price was a huge part of the decision-making because we knew that we could only spend a fraction of our limited budget on this luxury. When purchased the tree branches were tight against the trunk and wrapped with twine to hold them there. We would haul the tree home and keep it in the unheated porch so that it could stay cold until we were ready to bring it inside. It took a couple of days after the tree was screwed into the tree stand for the branches to begin opening away from the trunk and we were always warned to stifle our impatience and let this happen without our help.

There was always a danger of fire so we had to ensure that there was water in the tree stand every day. Our favourite decoration was the set of bubble lights that my dad had won in a bowling competition. The rest of the lights were very large and each had a different colour. We had balls that were used year after year as well as home-made decorations. Strings of popcorn were a fun and inexpensive garland to make and lay on the branches. A star graced the top of the tree. And of course, underneath was a tree skirt that had been purchased at a Christmas craft sale years before as well as a few wrapped gifts.

This year the tree at my office is white with pink balls. The one at home is fully decorated, collapsible and can be set up or put away in minutes.

There are so many stories about the origin of the Christmas tree. Some go back to 1400 and 1500 in Europe. Some trees were decorated with food, some put in the town square for the community to dance around and some were carried throughout the streets from house to house. It is believed that the first person to put a Christmas tree in the house was the sixteenth century German preacher Martin Luther. When he was walking through a forest and looked up to see the stars shining through the tree branches. He told his children that this reminded him of Jesus who left the stars of heaven to come to earth at Christmas.

Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert was from Germany and, in 1841, he had the first tree set up in Windsor Castle. Candles were likely used to decorate it. Seven years later a drawing of the tree was published in the London News and Christmas trees subsequently became popular in North America.

Some believe that the Christmas tree branches are a reminder that spring is to come. Christians use the tree as a symbol of everlasting life with God.

This week, think about the Christmas trees that you have encountered over the years and what meaning they have had for you.