
New Hampshire
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Christmas Tree Shipping Regulations

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Technology is making it easy for online Christmas tree shopping, but a bit more difficult for plant regulators. It seems that more and more people are now using the Internet to order their Christmas trees. Still a relatively new enterprise, growers have been selling trees online to customers who have found that they make good gifts to send to family and friends.

Unfortunately, prospective buyers and in some instances shippers, aren't aware that Christmas trees are regulated items, and as such, may require an inspection indicating they were found free of pests prior to shipment. What is complicating our efforts to prevent the introduction of Christmas tree pests is that anyone can order almost any tree variety online from just about any state. For example, a person in Arizona or Georgia can easily order a balsam fir from New Hampshire or Maine.

Every year shipments of New Hampshire Christmas trees are either detained or destroyed by some other state or federal official for violating federal plant shipping regulations. The most common mistake made is shipping the plant material without the proper certification. When ordering trees check to ensure that the trees are certified and conversely check with state agricultural officials before shipping trees to other states.

Currently, there are several federal quarantines guarding against the transport of infested or infected stock. The gypsy moth quarantine prohibits the movement of Christmas trees from a regulated state, such as New Hampshire, into a non-regulated state. Growers wishing to ship their trees, including orders obtained via the Internet, into these non-regulated states need to have their trees inspected. Once the trees are found to be free from all life stages of gypsy moth or other quarantined pests, the shipper will be issued a certificate that accompanies the merchandise on its travels, thus preventing any unnecessary detainment or confiscation.

In contrast, no state certification is required for the interstate shipment of wreaths. Potted trees, however, may require additional certification. Other quarantines that have been imposed that affect the various state Christmas tree shipping regulations include a federal quarantine on the common pine shoot beetle, as well as several state quarantines on the European pine shoot moth and scleroderris canker.

The international shipment of Christmas trees and wreaths requires that a different set of prerequisites are met and may involve import permits and state or federal phytosanitary certificates. Many countries, particularly in Europe, entirely prohibit the entry of certain U.S. Christmas trees and wreaths.

For more information on Christmas tree shipping regulations, contact the Division of Plant Industry, NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food, PO Box 2042, Concord, NH 03302-2042, call (603) 271-2561, or email piera.siegert@agr.nh.gov.

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