



Monthly Newsletter

DECEMBER 2015

WHERE'S THE SNOW?

Much of the central and eastern United States can expect mild weather often from December into January due to El Niño.

El Niño occurs when tropical Pacific waters are warmer than normal, and the pattern can last several months to a couple of years. The warm waters can impact the weather patterns around much of the globe.

This does not necessarily mean that every day will be mild and free of snow in the central and eastern U.S., but rather cold and snowy days will be infrequent.

As temperatures naturally trend downward into January, some storms may still produce substantial snow, especially in the northern tier, in the Appalachians and the Central states. However, the snow may not lay around very long as temperatures may not remain cold enough.

This year's El Niño is already considered to be strong and may continue to strengthen over the next couple of months. In recent years that had a strong El Niño, temperatures averaged much above normal in most of the Central and Eastern states.

Every year the weather is different, no matter how similar the weather pattern may appear. As a result some variability is to be expected during long-range forecasts.

There is the potential for colder weather and a big East Coast snow-storm or two during the latter part of winter and into March.

For more on this story, go to:

www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news/el-nino

CHRISTMAS TREE TRADITION HAS ANCIENT ORIGINS



King Tut never saw a Christmas tree, but he would have understood the tradition which traces back long before the first Christmas, says David Robson, Extension Educator, Horticulture with the Springfield Extension Center.

The Egyptians were part of a long line of cultures that treasured and worshipped evergreens. When the winter solstice arrive, they brought green date palm leaves into their homes to symbolize life's triumph over death.

The Romans celebrated the winter solstice with a fest called Saturnalia in honor of Saturnus, the god of agriculture. They decorated their houses with greens and lights and exchanged gifts. They gave coins for prosperity, pastries for happiness, and lamps to light one's journey through life.

Centuries ago in Great Britain, woods priests called Druids used evergreens during mysterious winter solstice rituals. The Druids used holly and mistletoe as symbols of eternal life, and place evergreen branches over doors to keep away evil spirits.

Late in the Middle Ages, Germans and Scandinavians placed evergreen trees inside their homes or just outside their doors to show their hope in the forthcoming spring. Our modern Christmas tree evolved from these early traditions.

Legend has it that Martin Luther began the tradition of decorating trees to celebrate Christmas. One crisp Christmas Eve, about the year 1500, he was walking through snow-covered woods and was struck by the beauty of a group of small evergreens. Their branches, dusted with snow, shimmered in the moonlight. When he got home, he set up a little fir tree indoors so he could share this story with his children. He decorated it with candles, which he lighted in honor of Christ's birth.

The Christmas tree tradition most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio, adds Robson.

But the custom spread slowly. The Puritans banned Christmas in New England. Even as late as 1851, a Cleveland minister nearly lost his job because he allowed a tree in his church. Schools in Boston stayed open on Christmas Day through 1870, and sometimes expelled students who stayed home.

The Christmas tree market was born in 1851 when Catskill farmer Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds of evergreens into New York City and sold them all. By 1900, one in five American families had a Christmas tree, and 20 years later, the custom was nearly universal.

Christmas tree farms sprang up during the depression. Nurserymen couldn't sell their evergreens for landscaping, so they cut them for Christmas trees. Cultivated trees were preferred because they have a more symmetrical shape than wild ones.

Six species account for about 90 percent of the nation's Christmas tree trade. Scotch pine ranks first, comprising about 40 percent of the market, followed by Douglas fir which accounts for about 35 percent. The other big sellers are noble fir, white pine, balsam fir and white spruce.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ATS

We want to offer our heartfelt thanks for all affording us the opportunity to be associated with you and your business throughout the year. May all of you have a Merry Christmas and a Safe and Prosperous New Year.



ATS SNOW QUOTE

"THE JOY OF BRIGHTENING OTHER LIVES, BEARING EACH OTHERS' BURDENS, EASING OTHER'S LOADS AND SUPPLANTING EMPTY HEARTS AND LIVES WITH GENEROUS GIFTS BECOMES FOR US THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS"

- W.C. Jones