



Christmas Tree Safety

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Tree Restrictions by Occupancy Location2

Fire Safety Measures3

 Natural Cut Trees3

 Artificial Trees and Vegetation.....4

Introduction

Both natural and artificial Christmas trees can pose fire hazards. This risk becomes more significant as natural trees dry out over time.

Many people keep their Christmas trees and holiday decorations up for a few weeks after the holidays. However, using seasonal lighting and keeping dried-out trees can increase the risk of fire.

Nearly 40 percent of home fires involving Christmas trees happen in January. While these incidents are relatively uncommon, they can be serious, with [one of every 40 reported home Christmas tree fires resulting in a fatality](#) (compared to an average of one death per 142 total reported home structure fires).

This information is based on Massachusetts Amendments to NFPA[®]1, 2021 (effective February 3, 2023) 527 CMR 1.00: Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code, which limits quantities of combustible vegetation, including natural cut Christmas trees, by occupancy.



Tree Restrictions by Occupancy Location

At Harvard, natural cut trees are allowed within apartment building units. They're only allowed in business occupancies in buildings equipped with automatic sprinkler systems.

Use this table to determine where natural cut and balled trees are allowed at Harvard.

Occupancy	Natural Cut Trees	Balled Trees
Ambulatory healthcare	Not allowed	Not allowed
Apartment building	Allowed within the unit	Allowed within the unit
Assembly (including dining halls, conference rooms, and common rooms)	Not allowed	Not allowed
Board and care	Not allowed	Not allowed
Business	Allowed if the building has a sprinkler system	Allowed if the building has automatic sprinklers
Daycare	Not allowed	Not allowed
Detention and correctional	Not allowed	Not allowed
Dormitories	Not allowed	Not allowed
Educational	Not allowed	Not allowed
Healthcare	Not allowed	Not allowed
Hotel	Not allowed	Not allowed
Industrial	Allowed if the building has a sprinkler system	Allowed if the building has automatic sprinklers



Occupancy	Natural Cut Trees	Balled Trees
Lodging and rooming	Not allowed	Allowed
Mercantile	Allowed if the building has a sprinkler system	Allowed if the building has automatic sprinklers

Fire Safety Measures

All natural and artificial trees and vegetation at Harvard must meet these criteria:

- Don't place trees or vegetation in places that obstruct any means of egress, including corridors or exit ways.
- Only use Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved electrical lights and wiring.
- Demonstrate the fire retardance of each individual decorative vegetation item, including lighting, in an approved manner.
- Keep trees and combustible vegetation away from open flames, such as from candles, lanterns, kerosene heaters, and gas-fired heaters.

Natural Cut Trees

In [occupancies where natural cut trees are allowed](#), all natural cut trees at Harvard must meet these criteria:

- Place the tree in a suitable stand with water.
- Before placing the tree in a stand, cut off the bottom end of the trunk with a straight, fresh cut at least 1/2 in (13 mm) above the end to allow the tree to absorb water.
- Maintain the water level above the fresh cut and check the water level at least once daily.
- Remove the tree from the building immediately upon evidence of dryness.
- Keep natural cut trees and combustible vegetation away from fixed or portable heating devices, including heating vents, which could cause them to dry out prematurely or ignite.



Artificial Trees and Vegetation

All artificial trees and vegetation at Harvard must meet these criteria:

- Ensure that artificial trees and vegetation are labeled, identified, or certified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- Don't use electrical lights on artificial metal trees.