

Christmas Trees For Schools

Information Sheet 2017

This information sheet is designed to help explain how we have operated the project with schools for many years and gives you a step by step guide as to how to set it up and answers your frequently asked questions. Please read it carefully and do not hesitate to ring us if you are not sure about anything.

What is the idea behind the scheme?

Trees for Christmas is a company which wholesales and retails Christmas Trees. We were looking for ideas to increase our wholesale business. In response to enquiries from some schools we decided to offer schools the benefit of buying trees at wholesale prices so they can raise funds for their school.

How does the scheme work?

It is very simple. The school takes orders for Christmas Trees from parents, at the school Christmas Fayre, by letter, selling from a retail site or by any other means it chooses. You send us your order and at an agreed time and date we deliver the trees to your school.

How much money will we make?

We will sell you the trees at the wholesale prices shown on the attached order form. As you will see these are typically half the cost you would pay in a garden centre. We sell you a 6ft -6ft 6" Nordman Fir at the wholesale price of £29. In a garden centre these will be retailing for about £50. You decide what you would like to charge for them but, for example, if you charged £39 for the tree you will be offering parents a significant saving and therefore a strong incentive to buy from the school and still make £10 per tree for school funds.

Will it take a lot of organising?

It shouldn't! Schools we already work with do it in a number of ways. It usually only involves one person. Some send a letter out to all parents explaining & advertising the scheme along with a booking form. Some hold a school Christmas Fayre and take orders on the day. One school gave it as a project to a group of pupils to help raise funds for a particular school trip. In essence all that you need is a simple system to advertise the scheme, take orders, collate them onto the attached order form and send it to us.

What about payment?

We ask for no money upfront. Once we have made the delivery we will send you an invoice and ask that you pay it within 30 days. You should have received all the money in from parents before you need to pay the invoice. We suggest that you ask parents for at least a deposit when they order the tree to avoid being left with unwanted trees.

Are the prices inclusive?

All our prices include delivery and VAT. The price on the order form is the price you pay.

How many must we order?

To make a delivery viable all we ask is that you order a minimum of 20 trees.

When do we need to place the order by?

The sooner the better! We need to ensure we have got sufficient stock to meet orders. In reality if you can send us the order by December 1st that would be great. However we can usually cope with orders a week or so later but they need to be received at least seven days before your delivery date. The later it is the more flexible you may need to be as to delivery times and the risk of us running out of stock. We reserve a certain quantity based on last year's figures but when these are gone we will be unable to get more at that price. We will reserve trees on a strictly first come first served basis so we urge you to get your orders in as soon as you possibly can to avoid disappointment. We will ring you on receipt of your order if we are unable to supply a particular size.

What happens if you want to add to your order?

What we ask is that you submit your final order at least 7 days before delivery. We **CANNOT** change orders once you have submitted them and we have processed them. We know it appears to be a simple thing to do to change one order but we produce delivery notes and send them to despatch immediately on receipt of your order and you can appreciate that having to change, reprint and relay the changes to 50 or more orders by one or two trees leads to a lot of extra work, confusion and errors. The final order is the final order! Please make your deadline clear to your parents and stick to it.

Can we have a sample tree to advertise the trees at our school?

Yes, we can happily supply you with a sample tree or trees so parents can see the quality of the trees we supply. The cost of the tree will be added to your order and invoiced later. You will have to arrange for someone to collect the tree from the Reigate or Liphook areas as we cannot deliver individual trees. Just email us and tell us what size and date you want to collect it. We have trees available from mid-November.

When can we get our order delivered?

Any time after 23rd November within reason. We operate seven days a week during the Christmas period. You tell us the exact date you want them delivered and we will try to fit you in. If there is a problem due to everyone wanting them on the same day etc. we will let you know as soon as we receive your order. Please book your delivery date as soon as possible when you know you are going to run the scheme. **Booking a delivery date does not commit you to running the scheme**, it simply gives you a guaranteed date you can work to and advertise. If for any reason you decide not to proceed with the scheme at a later date no problem. Many schools have already booked dates for December. We will deliver your order to one specified address. We cannot deliver individual trees. Let us know as soon as possible about your preferred delivery date to avoid promising parents a date we cannot do.

What time will the trees be delivered?

For 95% of orders trees will be delivered before 1pm on the day of delivery. We cannot guarantee a more precise delivery time in advance, there are only so many 'first drops' we can do. **We will not know a more precise time until the afternoon of the day prior to delivery.** Our haulier will ring to give you an estimated time of delivery. Please be aware that traffic problems etc. can cause this to change. We suggest you do not tell parents to collect trees before 2pm on the day of delivery. **There is no point ringing up a week before as we do not know the exact loading schedule until the afternoon prior to your delivery.**
Please make sure the contact name you put on the order is the person who will be taking delivery of the trees. Often we have rung and left messages the day before to advise of a delivery time only to find that the person is not there on the day and has not passed the

message on. We will ring you. Please ensure you check your voicemail if you have not heard from us by 5pm on the day before delivery.

What happens on the delivery day?

The lorry will turn up as close to the delivery time as is possible. If there any major delays they will ring and advise. The lorry needs access to your school and to be able to park up easily during unloading. The lorry is usually 18 tonnes, about the same size as a bin lorry. The driver will be alone and will need help to unload. He will move the trees to the tailgate of the lorry but you will need to provide assistance to move them from there to wherever you wish to stack them. The driver will not be able to carry them 50m across a playground etc. He will have many deliveries to do and cannot afford the time to do so. Please provide sufficient assistance to help him. The driver will give you a delivery note detailing what your order is. Please count the trees as they are unloaded and advise the driver immediately if there are any missing. Do not let parents take trees until you have counted and checked them and made sure each parent gets the correct size. The driver will not have any spare trees on board. He can only deliver to one address.

What if we have trees left?

We recommend you only place an order with us if you have actually an order yourself from parents. This way there should be no trees left. We cannot offer a sale or return deal. You cannot return unsold trees that you have ordered from us.

What sizes and species can we order?

Please read this section very carefully so you understand exactly what you are ordering and what you will get so you can make it clear to parents what they get when they order. The most common sizes and species are shown on the order form. The Nordman Fir is the most popular tree nowadays due to its low-drop qualities. We can offer other sizes and species if required, we have tried to keep the form very simple based on our previous experience. If you have a request for a size or species not listed please let us know, we can usually accommodate sizes up to 40ft! The sizes specified on the order form are the size grades we get from the grower. **The trees will all be within this size range.** For the past few years the majority of trees we have delivered have been the Blue tag 6ft-6ft 6" size (175cm-200cm) A 7/8ft tree (200/250cm) means the size could be anywhere within that range. If you want a tree that is guaranteed to be 8ft plus then you will need to order the next size up. **We cannot grade out trees within a range.** Our trees are measured from butt to half way up the terminal leader. Please use our sizes on the order form when passing on the information to parents. We have had problems in the past when schools have sent out order forms with the size range differing from ours.

How are the trees delivered?

All our trees are delivered as cut trees in nets for ease of handling and transporting. All trees will have coloured labels on them as per the order form so you can easily identify which are the different size grades. We cannot supply trees with roots on them. Christmas trees are a sustainable crop, grown in plantations much like a farmer grows wheat. Once harvested the area is replanted. Cutting Christmas trees does not result in deforestation. If you want to take the trees out of the nets and display then for sale you will need to consider how you can re-net them. It is not possible to put them back in the original nets.

Are these Trees fresh?

The trees are as fresh as is possible. Some will be from Denmark and some will be Scottish. Clearly with the numbers required they cannot all be cut the day before delivery! We have never had any major problems with our trees lasting, providing they are looked after. Occasionally, in

common with all growers, we have had an odd problem with premature needle drop. The consensus of opinion at present is that the main reason for this is not the trees freshness but a warm autumn and winter meaning the trees have not fully hardened off for winter when they are cut and they heat up once netted. With a 'normal' autumn this should not happen. To help reduce this problem try to remove the trees from the nets as soon as you can once you get home. Christmas Trees are a living product. Leave them outside for as long as you can. Cut off 1" from the base of the tree and put the tree into a stand that holds water, keep topped up regularly and position it away from radiators. In short treat them as cut flowers. You would not expect a bunch of flowers to last for 4 weeks without water in a hot house and still look at their best and a Christmas Tree is no different. Give it a bit of TLC!

What if there is a problem with a tree?

We will, of course, replace or refund any substandard tree. Remember that trees will be within the size grade ordered. A 175cm – 200cm tree 6ft/6ft 6" tree may be 176cm. We cannot guarantee they will all be towards the top of their size range. We need to know within 48 hours if there is a problem with a tree. It will be obvious as soon as it is un-netted. We cannot help if we are not told until 2 weeks later. We have no control of what happens if the tree is taken indoors and not watered for a fortnight!

Remember trees are a natural product so size and shape will vary a little.

Are these trees cheap because they are sub-standard?

Absolutely not! The trees are the same we have been selling for many years and built our reputation and customer base on quality. They are top grade trees. You will receive exactly the same grade of trees that we will be selling on our own retail sites. The only reason they appear cheap is that we buy large quantities, we are selling them to you at wholesale prices and garden centres are very greedy in their marking up of the trees for retail sale.

What is the catch?

There isn't one! We ask for no money upfront. You should have received all the money from the parents by the time they collect the trees. All we ask is payment within 30 days of receiving our invoice. There is no cash outlay needed and no risk, providing you take firm orders from parents and only order the same number from us. The prices quoted are fully inclusive with no hidden extras or VAT. We are a reputable company, locally based and are members of The British Christmas Tree Growers Association. We can supply references from other satisfied schools for you to check if you would like. Just ask.

What do we need to do next?

Ring or email us with your desired delivery date. Do this straight away to ensure we can accommodate that date. There is always one weekend which gets very busy. Better to book the date now, you can always cancel it later if you subsequently find you cannot get the minimum order, than promise a delivery date and then find out later it is full. We will confirm by return that your date is OK. Then advertise the scheme and start collecting orders.

If you have any other queries please do not hesitate to contact us and ask for Ian or Susie who will be delighted to help you.

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