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December 2012

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LAD FEATURE

## More market choice for the clubhouse Christmas tree

Dr Terry Mabbett provides some timely advice on selecting the perfect tree to add the festive touch to your club



UK is fast approaching complete self-sufficiency in Christmas trees. Picture courtesy of CIMA

Options and choices for the clubhouse Christmas tree have changed out of all proportion over the last twenty years, in the range of trees on offer, country of origin, method of production and even in the method of marketing.

Childhood Christmas tree memories for those the other side of fifty will be of Norway spruce, the traditional and often gangly conifer that dropped its needles en masse as Christmas moved into the New Year. Norway spruce is still used to today and continues to take a healthy slice of the lower end of the Christmas tree market, but has long been overtaken by the Nordmann fir. Nordmann fir is a much more compact and better looking tree and providing it has not been harvested too early will retain its needles when taken inside for decoration.

Historically Norway was never the main supplier of Norway spruce as Christmas trees and in the same way the Nordic sounding name of Nordmann fir hides the tree's true native origin. The wild native distribution of the Nordmann fir is in the Caucasus where Europe borders Asia in countries like Turkey and Georgia from where the best seed originates.

Denmark was always the biggest producer and supplier of Christmas trees for the European market and is originally responsible for the runaway success of Nordmann fir as a commercial Christmas tree, not only in the UK but all over Europe as well. It was Danish Christmas tree growers who sent into Georgia and collected the seed which started the contemporary Christmas tree industry based on Nordmann fir.

The other big change relates to country of origin. Ten years ago a Christmas tree purchased in the UK, whether Nordmann fir or Norway spruce, would more than likely have been grown in Europe (probably Denmark), and shipped to the UK for Christmas. Today your tree's roots will almost certainly have been embedded in Britain for Irish soil.

The British Christmas tree industry is one of unimpeded success with the UK going from dependency on European (usually Danish) grown Christmas trees to virtual self-sufficiency in little more than five years.

In yet another irony, we have the Doves – and the European Union (EU) – to thank for the UK's ongoing success in producing

Most British Christmas trees are now grown in the British Isles

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## An early rise to the top

Craig Booth's Carronhill in the BIGGA Golf Photographic Competition 2012





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