



P/S/U QUALITY GRADING SCHEME FOR ALL SPECIES

These specifications are applicable to all conifers up to three metres in height sold as Christmas trees. This quality grading scheme divides the trees in three quality classes: First Quality, Second Quality and unclassified.

MEASUREMENTS:

a) Height

All trees should be measured from:

- The cut in the case of cut trees
- The root collar, which is at the level of the surface of the soil, for bare rooted trees, root balled trees and trees in containers or pots

To:

- Where the top whorl or upper circle of branches reaches along the leader.

The height must be defined by one of the following sizing intervals or a combination of these intervals:

40/60 cm	100/125 cm	175/200 cm
60/80 cm	125/150 cm	200/250 cm
80/100 cm	150/175 cm	250/300 cm

b) The butt

The butt or the handle on a cut tree is the lower part of the stem without branches, measured from the cut to the lower branches of the tree with green needles. It should be at least 5% of the height of the tree. It should not be more than 10% of the height of any tree up to 2 metres and not more than 15% of the height of any tree over 2 metres unless otherwise stated in the contract.

c) Containers and pots

For trees up to 60 cm the container or pot should be at least 5 litres. For trees between 60 cm and 1 metre the container or pot should be at least 10 litres.

QUALITY GRADINGS:

Christmas trees should be divided into three categories, First Quality, Second Quality and Unclassified.

First quality

A first quality Christmas tree must have the following characteristics:

Colour:

The tree must look fresh and healthy, and have a uniform colour that is typical for its species.

Shape:

The width of the tree must not be greater than the height of the tree nor less than half the height of the tree.

Density:

The circles or whorls of branches must be spread evenly over the height of the tree and there should be a sufficient number of inter nodal branches to ensure a uniform density. A Nordmann or Noble fir tree that is between 1.0 and 1.5 metres must have at least 4 whorls, a tree between 1.5 metres and 2.0 metres must have at least 5 whorls and a tree between 2.0 metres and 3.0 metres must have at least 6 whorls.

Stem:

The tree must have only one straight stem in the centre of the tree. This is not considered to be a fault with Scots pine (*pinus sylvestris*) provided the tree is externally symmetrical.

Leader:

The tree must have one straight leader of a reasonable length.

Symmetry:

The tree must be symmetrical and the branches must be spread evenly round the stem. A Nordmann or Noble fir must have at least 4 branches of the same length in every whorl unless there are many inter nodal branches that will compensate for any minor deficiency.

Damages:

The tree may have one of the following minor faults provided the tree has an attractive appearance, is fresh and healthy and has a correct uniform colour:

- There should be no dead or broken branches
- The branches should be free from lichen, moss or bark damage
- The needles should be regularly spaced and well developed
- The needles should not show any signs of algae or minor damage by insects or animals

It is acceptable for the shape, density and symmetry of the tree to be improved by shearing and trimming. The leaders of Nordmann fir (*abies nordmanniana*) and Blue spruce (*picea pungens var. glauca*) should not be cut in the year they are to be sold. This will be a fault.

Second quality:

A second quality Christmas tree may have two of the following faults and none of the “damages” or one of the “damages” and but must otherwise meet all the other criteria for a first quality tree and must have an attractive appearance.

Colour:

A colour variation that is not typical of a healthy specimen of its species but is a tree with an attractive appearance.

Shape:

A tree with a width that is greater than the height of the tree but not more than 1.33 times the height of the tree or a tree with a width that is less than the half of the height of the tree but not less than 0.33 times the height of the tree.

Density:

A tree is more open and has rather less inter nodal branches than desirable. For Nordmann and Noble fir this means a tree between 1.0 and 1.5 metres that has only 3 whorls, or a tree between 1.5 and 2.0 metres that has only 4 whorls, or a tree that is between 2.0 and 3.0 metres that has only 5 whorls.

Stem:

A tree with a stem that is offset from the centre of the tree. This is not considered to be a fault with scots pine (*pinus sylvestris*) provided the tree is externally symmetrical.

Leader:

A tree has a leader that is short, bent or distorted

Symmetry:

A tree that is not symmetrical. In the case of a Nordmann or Noble fir this is defined as a tree that has a whorl with irregular branches or with less than 4 branches, provided that there are sufficient inter nodal branches to compensate for this distortion.

Damages:

In addition to having one of these faults the tree may also have one of the **damages** allowed in a first quality tree, provided the tree still has an attractive appearance.

It is acceptable for the shape, density and symmetry of the tree to be improved by shearing and trimming. The leaders of Nordmann fir (*abies nordmanniana*) and Blue spruce (*picea pungens var. glauca*) should not be cut in the year they are to be sold. This will be a fault.

Unclassified

Any tree that has one of the following faults must be unclassified.

Colour:

Any tree that has a severe discoloration or uneven colour caused by stress, illness, severe climatic conditions or any other reason.

Shape:

Any tree with a width that is more than 1.33 times the height of the tree or less than 0.33 times the height of the tree.

Density:

Any tree that has an uneven spread of branches and insufficient internodal branches. Nordmann and Noble fir between 1.0 and 1.5 metres with less than 3 whorls or between 1.5 and 2.0 metres with less than 4 whorls or between 2.0 and 3.0 metres with less than 5 whorls.

Stem:

A tree with two stems or a bent stem or with a butt that is distorted or is not straight.

Leader:

A tree without a leader.

Symmetry:

An obvious unsymmetrical or lopsided tree.

Damages:

A tree with more than one of the **damages** listed in the quality grading for first quality tree or has severe damage cause by any one of them or any tree with an unattractive appearance.

Unclassified trees are saleable trees of a lower quality that meet criteria set by the purchaser. All unclassified trees should be fresh and healthy but some relaxation of the specifications for colour, shape, density, symmetry (including the leader and the stem) and damages would need to be agreed between the seller and the purchaser.

HARVESTING CONDITIONS

The trees must be clean and free from rubbish such as dead leaves, grass, weeds or creepers. During the harvesting, storage and despatch of the trees the branches must not become muddy or dirty. The trees should be fresh and the time between harvesting and delivery to the customer should be as short as possible. Cut trees should be delivered to the trade within 15 days of being harvested.

