

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Don't let pests come into your home this holiday season**

*MDA encourages consumers to verify online or mail order Christmas tree purchases meet regulatory standards*

St. Paul, Minn. – Planning on buying a Christmas tree or holiday greens online this year? Be sure destructive pests aren't hitching a ride.

As the popularity of online and mail order trees grows, state and federal officials are sending out a warning to consumers that these plant items are regulated in certain areas of the country. These regulations, according to Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Plant Protection Director Geir Friisoe, aim to prevent the spread of several damaging forest pests such as gypsy moth, sirenix woodwasp and the pine shoot beetle.

“In the past, MDA has found live cut Christmas trees, indoor decorative artificial trees and even potpourri shipped into Minnesota contaminated with insects,” said Friisoe. “We at the MDA try our best to keep these destructive pests out of our state and we're asking consumers to help. People should know where their purchase is coming from and if the company is complying with all state and federal regulations.”

Quarantines have been established in certain parts of the country to limit the spread of invasive pests and diseases. In order for a Christmas tree grower to ship out of the quarantine zone, the operator must have their products treated and/or inspected and certified free of regulated pests.

Customers can simply ask prior to purchase for proof that that product in question meets all requirements to ship to Minnesota. The supplier should be able to provide documentation that the product came from an area not regulated by state and federal quarantines or meets all government standards to ship out of a quarantine zone.

If consumers are looking for a guaranteed way to ensure their trees and greens meet all state and federal standards, they can simply buy a locally grown product. To find a Christmas tree farm nearby, search the online Minnesota Grown Directory at [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com).

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