

Decorative Treetops and Trees Permit and License



Coniferous treetops and small trees—primarily spruce, 1 to 6 feet long—are used to make holiday and winter decorations that are distributed nationwide. The decorative materials and greens industry offers seasonal employment to thousands of people throughout the state.

Careful management and harvesting support healthy forests and a supply of decorative treetops and trees into the future. Harvester permits and buyer's licenses are important tools to ensure sound management of our forest resources and illustrate the industry's commitment to sustainability.

Do I Need a Permit or License?

Harvesting and buying all types of decorative forest material is governed by *Minnesota Statutes*, sections 88.641 - 88.648. A "HARVESTER" IS ANY PERSON COLLECTING DECORATIVE MATERIALS FROM A FOREST. A "BUYER" IS ANY PERSON PURCHASING DECORATIVE FOREST MATERIAL.

Harvester Permit

Permission is needed to harvest on public or private lands.

Public Land: A harvester needs a permit to harvest any amount of treetops or trees on public land. The harvester can obtain the permit from the government land manager—state, county, or federal. Each government land manager issues their own

permit. Costs and requirements vary, be sure to contact the right local government office for details.

Private Land: A harvester must obtain written consent, permit, or bill of sale from the land owner to harvest more than 50 spruce stems or branches greater than 6 inches in length or more than 100 pounds of any other decorative material on any private land. The documentation must contain the legal description or property tax identification number of the land, as well as the landowner's name, address, and signature.

Buyer's License

A buyer's license is required to purchase more than 50 spruce stems or branches greater than 6 inches in length or more than 100 pounds of any other decorative materials, such as treetops or trees, harvested from any land in Minnesota—public or private. Only one buyer's license is needed, regardless if the boughs come from public or private land. Purchase licenses at any Electronic License System (ELS) vendor—the same locations where hunting and fishing licenses are sold.

Buyers must keep a decorative material buyer's log to record and track:

- Harvester's name and address
- Type of consent: permit, written consent, or bill of sale
- Harvest permit number for boughs from public land
- Legal description and property tax ID number for boughs from private land

Records must be maintained until June 30 of the following calendar year. Buyers may NOT purchase decorative materials from a harvester who is unable to furnish all required information. For a buyer's log template, visit mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts

Transporting

A harvester transporting or possessing more than 50 spruce stems or branches greater than 6 inches

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in length or more than 100 pounds of any other decorative materials, such as treetops and trees, must carry a harvester permit or written landowner consent for the material. A buyer and anyone transporting material for a buyer must have a buyer's license and buyer's log for all the material in the load.

Penalties

A person who fails to comply with the law is subject to a misdemeanor, seizure, and confiscation of decorative treetops and trees, and other penalties provided by law. The DNR Commissioner may deny, modify, suspend, or revoke a buyer's license for reasonable cause, including falsifying required records or for violating *Minnesota Statutes*, sections 88.641 - 88.648.

Sustainable Harvest Practices

Based on the landowner's specifications and management goals, harvesters cut 1 to 6 feet of the treetop or an entire small tree. Careful harvesting allows coniferous forests to continue growing, providing for additional harvests in 5 to 15 years depending on the site. Thoughtful harvesting can help the stand by reducing competition and leaving the best trees to remain growing.

Because spruce grows on predominately-wetland sites that are extremely susceptible to rutting and soil compaction, careful harvest techniques and low ground pressure equipment are necessary to maintain water flow, avoid soil rutting, reduce sediment runoff, and promote forest productivity.

Careful harvest techniques to minimize site impacts

- Follow the **Minnesota Forest Resources Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines**. Pay particular attention to the sections on Roads, Landings, and Skid Trails; Stream and Wetland Crossings; and Spills and Emergencies
- Minimize ground impacts from equipment by planning and limiting the number, width, and size of onsite trails and landings.
- Leave one to several live whorls of branches to foster leader growth for future treetop establishment.
- Transport treetops or trees out of wetlands using low ground pressure equipment to minimize rutting and soil compaction.
- Cut treetops or trees should be stored in a cool dry area, such as a refrigerated trailer, to maintain freshness.
- When thinning trees, leave remaining, untopped trees spaced 6-to 8-feet apart at stocking levels of 800 to 1,200 trees per acre.

More Info

- Visit mndnr.gov/decorativeforestproducts for details on permits and licenses.
- The *Minnesota Harvester Handbook* from the University of Minnesota is a great source of information on harvesting decorative materials.

