



Arizona's Gift

from the Grand Canyon State
CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE 2009

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CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE HISTORY

For the first time in history, Arizona has been selected to provide the United States Congress with the Christmas tree placed in front of the Capitol building. The year-long project and enormous undertaking brings together the citizens of Arizona. From schoolchildren making the more than 5,000 ornaments to the 75 companion trees placed throughout federal offices in Washington, D.C., the effort involves people throughout the Grand Canyon State. As Arizona makes history by presenting the Capitol Christmas Tree for 2009, it is interesting to know a bit about the history of this uniquely American tradition.

- **1964** John W. McCormack, Speaker of the House of Representatives, establishes the tradition of the Capitol Christmas Tree. With a live Douglas fir from The Buddies Nursery in Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, that cost \$700, the People's Christmas Tree tradition began.
- Arizona's own Carl T. Hayden, Democrat, who served in Congress for a record 56 years, lit the first tree on December 18, 1964. The Douglas fir was planted on the west side of the United States Capitol.
- **1968** After a series of storms, the first Capitol Christmas Tree died and was removed.
- **1969** The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service works in conjunction with the Architect of the Capitol to establish the official protocol and ceremony of the Capitol Christmas Tree.
- **1970** Only one American state is selected to provide the fresh tree each year. West Virginia is the first state, contributing a 40-foot Norway Spruce. Often called "The People's Tree," the holiday symbol has ranged in height from 40 feet to 75 feet tall.
- **1980s** The annual Christmas ceremony becomes a national showcase for a different state each year. The trees are delivered to Washington, DC after touring their own states and embarking upon, in most cases, a national tour. States begin to contribute additional trees for display throughout the Capitol Complex including congressional offices and various federal buildings.
- **1990s** States compete to deliver the tallest and most grand trees ever. With trees reaching 65 feet, more decorations are required, with the tradition of schoolchildren handcrafting each ornament. Most trees during this decade contained approximately 3,000 holiday ornaments.
- **2000s** The Capitol Christmas Tree begins to use LED (Light Emitting Diodes) lights throughout. Using less electricity, the eco-friendly lights are part of the green movement. With trees now as tall as a five-story building, about 10,000 LED lights used.
- **2009** For the first time, Arizona is selected to gift the Capitol Christmas Tree. The tree will be selected from the Apache Sitgreaves National Forests, located in northeastern Arizona.

APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FORESTS
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