



THE WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS TREE

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The 2005 Blue Room Christmas Tree

The **White House Christmas Tree**, also known as the **Blue Room Christmas Tree**, is the official indoor [Christmas tree](#) at the residence of the [President of the United States](#), the [White House](#). The first indoor Christmas tree was installed in the White House sometime in the 19th century (there are varying claims as to the exact year) and since 1961 the tree has had a themed motif at the discretion of the [First Lady of the United States](#).

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History



President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy with the first themed Blue Room tree in 1961.



The 2002 Blue Room Christmas tree.

First tree

The White House had its first Christmas tree in 1889, when Benjamin Harrison was President. Depending on which sources are consulted, the White House never had a Christmas tree until the 1850s or 1889.^[11] There are two claims to the "first" genuine White House Christmas tree. President [Franklin Pierce](#) is said to have had the first indoor Christmas tree at the White House during the 1850s,^[2] variously reported as 1853^[3] or 1856.^[4] Others claim the first tree was during President [Benjamin Harrison](#)'s administration (either in 1888,^[5] 1889,^{[6][7]} or 1891^[2]). First Lady [Caroline Harrison](#) helped decorate the tree, which was installed in the second floor oval parlor today's [Yellow Oval Room](#).^[6] There is an 1880 reference to [President Tyler] in the 1840s hosting a children's party at which there was a Christmas tree with gifts.^[8]

General

Following the [Harrison administration](#) indoor trees were not always used at the White House. First Lady [Lou Henry Hoover](#) began the tradition of presidential wives decorating the White House tree with the first "official" White House Christmas tree in 1929.^[6] In 1961 First Lady [Jacqueline Kennedy](#) began the tradition of selecting a theme for the White House Christmas tree by decorating with a [Nutcracker](#) motif.^[9]

Years without a tree

As stated, there were years where no indoor White House Christmas tree was installed at all. It is verifiable that there was no Christmas tree in the White House in 1902,^[10] 1904,^[11] 1907,^[12] and 1922.^[13] The lack of a tree in 1902 was due to the fact that President [Theodore Roosevelt](#) had not ordered one by December 23.^[10]

Additionally, other presidents never displayed a tree in the White House. First U.S. President George Washington held office at a time when there was no White House, thus it is impossible for him to have displayed a tree there.^[14] There is no evidence that Abraham Lincoln ever

displayed a Christmas tree in the White House.^[15] In 1922 First Lady [Florence Harding](#)'s illness led to a more subdued Christmas celebration at the White House and no Christmas tree.^[13]

Controversy



The 1995 Blue Room Christmas tree – one of its ornaments was a source of political controversy for some.

The official White House Christmas tree has several times been seen as controversial by some. In 1899 the White House of President [William McKinley](#) received letters urging the president to forgo participation in the "Christmas tree habit".^[16] The letter writers, which the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted had taken up the "forestry fad", referred to "arboreal infanticide", according to the *Tribune*.^[16] Those opposed to a tree in the White House that year also termed Christmas trees "un-American" because it was a historically German tradition.^[16] At least one tree was displayed in the White House that year, in the kitchen department, for the maids.^[16]

The [Nixon administration](#)'s choice of [tree topper](#), the atomic symbol of peace rather than a traditional star, was criticized.^[17] The 1995 Blue Room Christmas Tree sought ornaments made by architecture students from across the United States.^[18] Contest winner Rene Spineto stirred up some controversy when she designed an ornament that depicted two [stockings](#), one marked "Bill" and the other marked "Newt" (in reference to President [Bill Clinton](#) and Speaker of the House [Newt Gingrich](#)).^[18] While the stocking marked "Bill" was filled with candy and presents, the one marked "Newt" was filled with coal.^[18] The Clinton administration hung the ornament on the tree without censorship.^[18]

In his 1998 book *Unlimited Access*, former-FBI agent [Gary Aldrich](#) describes what he claims he saw in the White House during the [Clinton administration](#). The book, published by an established conservative publishing house, [Regnery Publishing](#),^[19] states that the 1994 White House Christmas Tree was decorated with [condoms](#) and [drug paraphernalia](#).^[20] [George Stephanopoulos](#) called the book a "work of fiction";^[19] it has also been called "infamous".^[21]

In 2008 one of the ornaments designed by a [Seattle](#) artist, Deborah Lawrence, was rejected for inclusion on the Blue Room Christmas Tree.^[221] The rejected ornament was a red and white striped 9-inch ball with the words "Impeach Bush" emblazoned on it.^[221] The ornament was the only one of about 370 submitted that was rejected.^[221]

Tree



The 2007 Blue Room Christmas tree arrives by horse-drawn carriage

Description

The White House Christmas tree is selected from various growers nationwide.^[231] [Growers](#) in the state of [North Carolina](#) have provided 11 trees, more than any other state. The states of [Washington](#) and [Wisconsin](#), as of 2011, share the second highest total of trees provided for the White House with seven. The White House Christmas tree has been displayed in the [Blue Room](#) many times since 1961. It has also occasionally been displayed in the [Entrance Hall](#).^{[9][24]}

Generally, there is more than one Christmas tree in and around the White House, for instance, in 1997 there were 36,^[25] in 2008 there were 27.^[26] Traditionally, the tree in the Blue Room is the official White House Christmas tree.^{[25][27]} The White House Christmas tree usually stands nearly 20 feet tall and the crystal chandelier in the Blue Room must be removed for the tree to fit the room.^[27] Frequently, the tree's height is reported as 18^{[28][29]} or 18½ feet tall.^{[30][31]} The Blue Room tree is donated each year by the [National Christmas Tree Association](#) (NCTA).^[27] The NCTA has donated the tree since 1966;^[32] it is chosen through a contest among members of the trade group.^[32]

List of White House Christmas trees (1961–2014)


Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	2014	Concolor fir , Lehighton , Pennsylvania ^{[33][34]}		Michelle Obama	Blue Room	
	2013	Douglas fir , Lehighton , Pennsylvania ^{[35][36]}	Ornaments paid tribute to military families. Children living on military bases contributed greeting cards	Michelle Obama	Blue Room	Gather Around: Stories of the Season ^[38]




Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	2012	Fraser fir, Jefferson, North Carolina ^[39]	in the shape of their home state. Those were hung from the tree along with round ornaments that silhouetted each state and territory. ^[37] Tree dedicated to U.S. military members, veterans and their families. Ornaments were decorated by children living on U.S. military bases worldwide. ^[40]	Michelle Obama	Blue Room	Joy to All ^[40]
	2011	Balsam fir, Neshkoro, Wisconsin ^[41]	Medals, badges, and patches from all of the military branches were displayed on ornaments. ^[42]	Michelle Obama	Blue Room ^[41]	Shine, Give, Share ^[42]
	2010	Douglas fir , ^[43] Lehighton, Pennsylvania ^[44]	The Blue Room tree had a specific theme within the overall theme – "Gift of the American Spirit." ^[45] It honored state and county fairs and featured prize ribbons from each state and territory. ^[46]	Michelle Obama	Blue Room ^[43]	"Simple Gifts" ^[46]
	2009	Douglas fir, Shepherdstown, West Virginia ^[47]	"We took about 800 ornaments left over from previous administrations, we sent them to 60 local community groups throughout the country, and asked them to decorate them to pay tribute to a favorite local landmark and then send them back to us for display here at the White House." ^[48]	Michelle Obama	Blue Room ^[47]	Reflect, Rejoice, Renew ^[48]







Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	2008	Fraser fir, Crumpler, North Carolina ^[49]	Ornaments designed by artists from around the country selected by members of Congress. The ornaments had a patriotic theme. ^[49]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[49]	A Red, White, and Blue Christmas ^[49]
	2007	Fraser fir, Laurel Springs, North Carolina ^[50]	Each ornament represented one of the 391 National Park Service sites . ^[24]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[24]	Holiday in the National Parks ^[50]
	2006	Douglas fir, Lehighton, Pennsylvania ^[51]	Crystals and ornaments of iridescent glass. ^[51]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[51]	Deck the Halls and Welcome All ^[51]
	2005	Fraser fir, Laurel Springs, North Carolina ^[52]	White lilies, crystal spheres and light-catching garland. ^[52]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[52]	All Things Bright and Beautiful ^[52]
	2004	Noble fir, Rochester, Washington ^[53]	Musical instruments hand-painted by members of the Society of Decorative Painters . ^[53]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[24]	A Season of Merriment and Melody ^[24]
	2003	Fraser fir, Wisconsin ^[54]	Ornaments first used by Barbara Bush in 1989. ^[54]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[54]	A Season of Stories ^[54]







Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	2002	Noble fir, Elma, Washington ^{[55][56]}	An artist from each state designed an ornament based on a native bird. ^[55]	Laura Bush	Blue Room	All Creatures Great and Small ^[55]
	2001	White fir, Middleburg, Pennsylvania ^[57]	An artist from each state designed miniature replicas of historic houses from their region. ^[57]	Laura Bush	Blue Room ^[57]	Home for the Holidays
	2000	Douglas fir, Auburn, Pennsylvania ^[30]	Ornaments were from the First Lady's past. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[58]	Holiday Reflections ^[58]
	1999	Noble fir, Elma, Washington ^[59]	Doll makers fashioned toys of American historical figures for this tree. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[59]	Holiday Treasures at the White House ^[58]
	1998	Balsam fir, Endeavor, Wisconsin ^[60]	Knitting Guild of America and the Society of Decorative Painters worked together with fabric artists from each state on the ornaments. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[61]	Winter Wonderland ^[58]
	1997	Fraser fir, ^[25] Grassy Creek, North Carolina ^[62]	Members of the National Needlework Association and Council of Fashion Designers of America joined with glass artisans to design the trimmings. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[63]	Santa's Workshop ^[58]








Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1996	Colorado blue spruce , Coshocton, Ohio ^[64]	Woodcraft artisans and professional ballet companies helped with the ornaments. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[64]	Nutcracker Suite ^[58]
	1995	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[18]	Ornaments contributed by American architecture students and members of the American Institute of Architects . ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[65]	A Visit From St. Nicholas ^[58]
	1994	Blue spruce , Missouri ^[66]	Ornaments contributed by American art students. ^[58]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[58]	The Twelve Days of Christmas ^[58]
	1993	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	More than 1,000 artists contributed angel-themed ornaments. ^[67]	Hillary Clinton	Blue Room ^[67]	Angels ^[67]
	1992	Grand fir , ^[66] Oregon ^[68]	White House florists made 88 gift-giving characters. ^[69]	Barbara Bush	Blue Room ^[68]	Gift-givers ^[69]
	1991	Noble fir, Salem, Oregon ^[70]	Saintly Stitchers of St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston created a needlepoint village and 92 pieces for a White House staff built Noah's Ark. ^[69]	Barbara Bush	Blue Room ^[70]	Needle work tree ^[69]
	1990	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	Used miniature porcelain dancers. ^[69]	Barbara Bush	Blue Room ^[24]	Nutcracker Suite ^[69]







Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1989	Fraser fir, Pennsylvania ^[66]	White House staff created 80 soft-sculpture literary characters. ^[69]	Barbara Bush	Blue Room ^[69]	Family literacy ^[69]
	1988	Balsam fir, Montello, Wisconsin ^[71]	Reused hand-blown glass ornaments from the Eisenhower administration , and reused Nixon's state flower balls. White House carpenters made 300 wood candles. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[71]	Old-fashioned tree ^[71]
	1987	Fraser fir, West Virginia ^[66]	Miniature instruments, notes and sheet music made by patients at Second Genesis, drug-treatment program. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[73]	Musical theme ^[72]
	1986	Fraser fir, Washington ^[66]	15 soft-sculpture nursery rhyme scenes and 100 geese made by patients at Second Genesis, drug-treatment program. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[74]	Mother Goose theme ^[72]
	1985	Blue spruce, Michigan ^[66]	1,500 Ornaments made by patients at Second Genesis, drug-treatment program. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[75]	Ornaments made from Christmas cards sent to the Reagans in 1984. ^[72]
	1984	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	Ornaments made by patients at Second Genesis, drug-treatment program. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[76]	Ornaments made from plant material and other handcrafted natural ornaments. ^[72]







Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1983	Noble fir, Orting, Washington ^[77]	Reused 1982 ornaments and added old-fashioned toys lent by Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum . ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[77]	Old-Fashioned toys. ^[72]
	1982	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	Ornaments made by patients at Second Genesis, drug-treatment program. ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[78]	Foil paper cones and metallic snowflakes ^[72]
	1981	Douglas fir, ^[79] Pennsylvania ^[66]	Nancy Reagan's first tree did not involve Second Genesis. The ornaments were loaned by the Museum of American Folk Art . ^[72]	Nancy Reagan	Blue Room ^[72]	Ornaments from the Museum of American Folk Art. ^[72]
	1980	Douglas fir, Bristol, Indiana ^[80]	Dolls, hats, fans, tapestries and laces. ^[81]	Rosalynn Carter	Blue Room ^[82]	Victorian theme ^[81]
	1979	Douglas fir, West Virginia ^[83]	Corcoran School of Art created ornaments from balsa wood , fabric and dried flowers. ^[81]	Rosalynn Carter	Blue Room ^[84]	American folk art of the colonial period ^[81]
	1978	Veitch fir , New York ^[66]	Victorian dolls and miniature furniture lent by the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum. ^[81]	Rosalynn Carter	Blue Room ^[85]	Antique toys ^[81]






Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1977	Noble fir, Washington ^[66]	National Association for Retarded Citizens made eggshell ornaments. ^[81]	Rosalynn Carter	Blue Room ^[81]	Painted milkweed pods, nut pods, foil and eggshell ornaments. ^[81]
	1976	Balsam fir, Wisconsin ^[66]	Natural ornaments made by the Garden Club of America. ^[86]	Betty Ford	Blue Room ^[86]	"Love that is the spirit of Christmas"
	1975	Douglas fir, New York ^[87]	Used ornaments from 1974 plus experts from Colonial Williamsburg made ornaments from paper snowflakes , acorns, dried fruits, pinecones, vegetables, straw, cookies and yarn. ^[86]	Betty Ford	Blue Room ^[24]	Old-fashioned children's Christmas ^[86]
	1974	Concolor fir, Michigan ^[66]	Ornaments made by Appalachian women and senior citizens groups. ^[86]	Betty Ford	Blue Room ^[86]	Handmade crafts, thrift and recycling ^[86]
	1973	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	In honor of James Madison ^[88]	Pat Nixon	Blue Room ^[84]	Gold theme ^[88]
	1972	Noble fir, Washington ^[66]	Reused 1969 ornaments, added 3,000 pastel satin finish balls, and 150 gold federal stars. ^[88]	Pat Nixon	Blue Room ^[89]	<i>Still Life with Fruit and Nature's Bounty</i> , paintings by Severin Roesen ^[88]






Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1971	Fraser fir, North Carolina ^[66]	Reused 1969 ornaments, added Monroe fans, and gold foil angels. ^[88]	Pat Nixon	Blue Room ^[89]	American Flower Tree ^[88]
	1970	<u>White spruce</u> , Wisconsin ^[66]	Reused 1969 ornaments, added 53 Monroe fans. ^[88]	Pat Nixon	Blue Room ^[88]	American Flower Tree ^[88]
	1969	Blue spruce, <u>Ohio</u> ^[66]	Disabled workers from Florida made velvet and satin balls featuring each state's <u>state flower</u> . ^[88]	Pat Nixon	<u>North Entrance</u> ^[24]	American Flower Tree ^[88]
	1968	<u>White pine</u> , <u>Indianapolis</u> ^[90]	19th century American style with gingerbread cookies. ^[91]	<u>Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson</u>	Blue Room ^[91]	19th century gingerbread tree ^[91]
	1967	Blue spruce, Ohio ^[66]	Same as 1965–66 but with silver <u>baubles</u> , silver stars, and round mirrors added. ^[92]	Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson	Blue Room ^[92]	Early American ^[92]
	1966	Balsam fir, Wisconsin ^[66]	Traditional ornaments: nuts, fruit, popcorn, dried seedpods, gingerbread cookies and wood roses from Hawaii. ^[92]	Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson	Blue Room ^[92]	Early American ^[92]
	1965		Traditional ornaments: nuts, fruit, popcorn, dried seedpods, gingerbread cookies and wood roses from Hawaii. ^[92]	Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson	Blue Room ^[92]	Early American ^[92]

Image	Year	Species and location grown	Ornamentation notes	First Lady	Location	Theme
	1964	Balsam fir ^[93]		Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson	Blue Room ^[94]	
	1963		The tree was very subdued as the nation mourned John F. Kennedy's assassination. ^[95]	Claudia 'Lady Bird' Johnson	Blue Room ^[95]	
	1962		Reused ornaments from 1961 plus other ornaments made by disabled and senior citizens. ^[9]	Jacqueline Kennedy ^[9]	North Entrance ^[9]	Childhood ^[9]
	1961	Balsam fir ^[91]	Toys, birds, and angels modeled after Tchaikovsky's <i>Nutcracker Suite</i> ballet. ^[9]	Jacqueline Kennedy ^[9]	Blue Room ^[9]	<i>Nutcracker Suite</i> ^[9]

List of other known White House Christmas trees

This list is [incomplete](#); you can help by [expanding it](#).

Year	Species and location grown	General notes	First Lady	Location	Theme (if any)
1960		"Presents were piled high under the magnificent tree and stretched for yards into the East Room." ^[96]	Mamie Eisenhower	East Room ^[96]	
1959		Of the 26 trees there were trees in the laundry room, the maid's sitting room and David Eisenhower had his own private tree in the children's quarters. ^[91]	Mamie Eisenhower	26 trees throughout the White House ^[91]	
1958		". . . decorated with electric candle lights, glass balls and large amounts of tinsel." ^[97]	Mamie Eisenhower	27 trees throughout the White House ^[97]	

Year	Species and location grown	General notes	First Lady	Location	Theme (if any)
1957			Mamie Eisenhower	East Room ^[98]	
1955			Mamie Eisenhower	East Room ^[99]	
1954		Silver tinsel , Eisenhower grandchildren opened presents under this tree. ^[100]	Mamie Eisenhower	East Room ^[100]	
1947			Bess Truman	East Room ^[101]	
1944		Elliot Roosevelt : ". . . the Christmas tree was in place and decorated, the piles of presents were ready for the unwrapping – each person's pile heaped on a separate chair." ^[11]	Eleanor Roosevelt	Family quarters ^[11]	
1939			Eleanor Roosevelt	East Room ^[99]	
1937		". . . gleamed with snow and silver trimming." ^[102]	Eleanor Roosevelt	East Room ^[102]	
1936			Eleanor Roosevelt	East Room ^[103]	
1934		Multiple trees were installed in the White House, some for public viewing and others for private enjoyment of the Roosevelts. ^[102] A large tree was installed in the White House East Room. ^[104]	Eleanor Roosevelt	East Room ^[104]	
1929		First "official" White House tree. ^[6]	Lou Henry Hoover		
1926		Mrs. Coolidge chose to display three Christmas trees at the White House. ^[105]	Grace Coolidge		

Year	Species and location grown	General notes	First Lady	Location	Theme (if any)
1923	Norway spruce ^[106]	White House had two Christmas trees. ^[106]	Grace Coolidge	Blue Room, and family quarters ^[106]	
1917 ^[107]			Edith Bolling Galt Wilson		
1916			Edith Bolling Galt Wilson	Library ^[108]	The tree was for Wilson's great niece Josephine Cothran. ^[109]
1915		Laden with gifts from members of the family and household. ^[110]	Edith Bolling Galt Wilson	Library	
1914			none	White House library ^[111]	
1912			Helen Taft	Blue Room ^[112]	
1908		The first time there was a tree in the Roosevelt White House that was not attributed to young Archie Roosevelt. ^[113]	Edith Roosevelt		
1905		Tree decorated and set up by Archie Roosevelt , as the only member of the family who had "a fondness" for Christmas trees he distributed the presents "through this medium". ^[114]	Edith Roosevelt		
1903		Tree decorated solely by young Archie Roosevelt. ^[115]	Edith Roosevelt	Living Room (The President's Den) ^{[115][116]} (then Archie Roosevelt's bedroom) ^{[115][116]}	
1896		Decorated with red, white and blue electric lights. ^[117] The decorating was supervised by Mrs. Cleveland and included tinsel ornaments and toys. ^[116]	Frances Cleveland	Library ^[117]	
1895	Cedar ^[118]	Tree featured electric lights. ^[7]	Frances Cleveland	Library ^[118]	

Year	Species and location grown	General notes	First Lady	Location	Theme (if any)
1894		"Beautifully trimmed and decorated". ^[119] Decorated with "tiny parti-colored electric lamps instead of the old-time wax candles." ^[120]	Frances Cleveland	Library ^[119]	
1893			Frances Cleveland	Library ^[16]	
1891			<u>Caroline Harrison</u>	<u>Library</u> ^[121]	
1890		At least one tree was displayed "for the little ones". ^[122]	Caroline Harrison		
1889	Foxtail <u>hemlock</u> ^[123]	Glass balls and pendants, gold tinsel. ^[123] Four-sided-lanterns ^[123] used candles used for lighting. ^[6] Credited as the first White House Christmas tree though the claim is disputed (<u>see above</u>).	Caroline Harrison	<u>Yellow Oval Room</u> ^[6]	
1853 ^[1] or 1856 ^[4]		Decorated for a group of Washington, D.C. school children. ^[124] Credited as the first White House Christmas tree though the claim is disputed (<u>see above</u>).	<u>Jane Pierce</u>		

See also

- National Christmas Tree
- Capitol Christmas Tree
- The Tree at Rockefeller Center
- White House Hanukkah Party

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