GUIDELINES

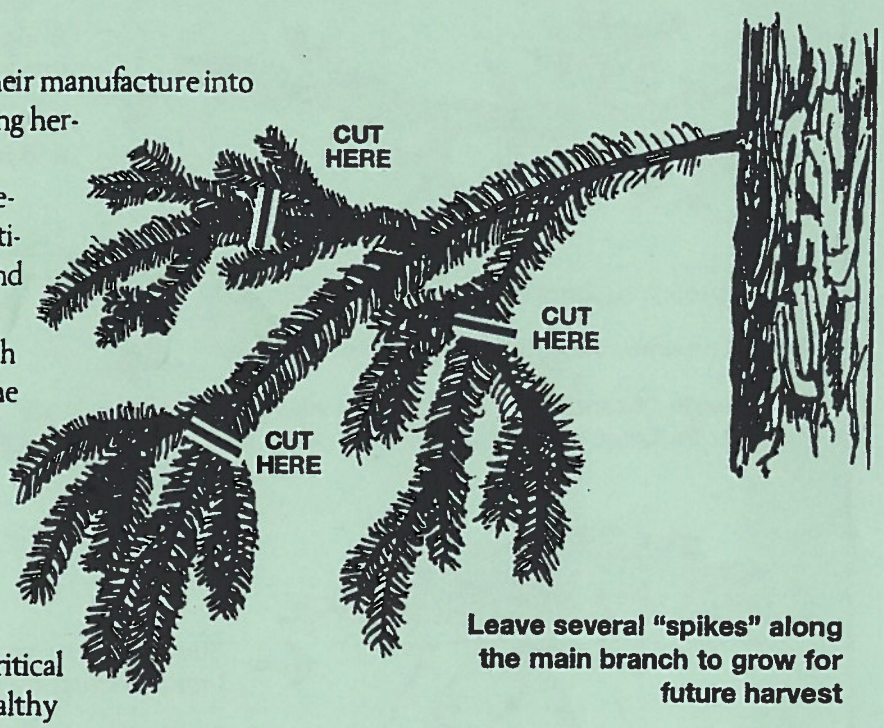
for the
Sustainable Harvest of Balsam Boughs

TAKING A BOUGH

The gathering of balsam boughs and their manufacture into evergreen holiday products is a long-standing heritage of Minnesota's northwoods.

These same woods are the beauty, recreation, and the economics of thousands of citizens, and the habitat of a myriad of woodland animal species.

A healthy and sustainable balsam bough resource is a responsibility of all citizens. The following guidelines have been established for the sustainable harvest of Minnesota's balsam bough resource.



Leave several "spikes" along the main branch to grow for future harvest

THOUGHTFUL PRUNING. PROPER HARVESTING.

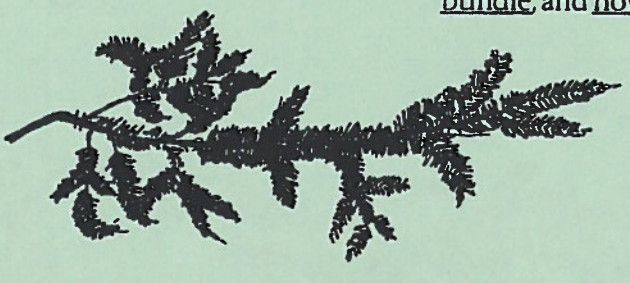
The harvesting of balsam boughs is a critical element in preserving and promoting a healthy balsam bough resource and annual harvest.

KEY POINTS

- **Harvest boughs from the bottom half of the tree. *The wreath industry prefers the flat or semi-round boughs that are typically found at the bottom of balsam trees.* The round, rough-looking boughs of the upper part of older tress are not suitable for use in the wreath industry.**
- **When harvesting branches from the bottom of the tree, leave a portion of each pruned branch for regeneration. This will ensure balsam boughs for the future.**
- **When harvesting from smaller trees, leave at least 50 percent of the balsam tree's limbs intact in the upper portions of the tree.**
- **Harvested branches should have ends no larger in diameter than a pencil. As you harvest along the branch, leave part of the branch for growth and regeneration.**
- **Harvest boughs from trees that are greater than 7 feet high.**
- **Choose trees to trim that stand beyond 50 feet of public roads so that the aesthetic value of balsam trees can still be enjoyed by passerbys.**

FIR BETTER - OR WORSE

Better boughs (in the eyes of the buyer) bring better prices. What makes a "good" bough? Production criteria includes length and type of boughs, freshness and quality, size of twigs in the bundle, weight of the bundle, and how the bundle is tied.



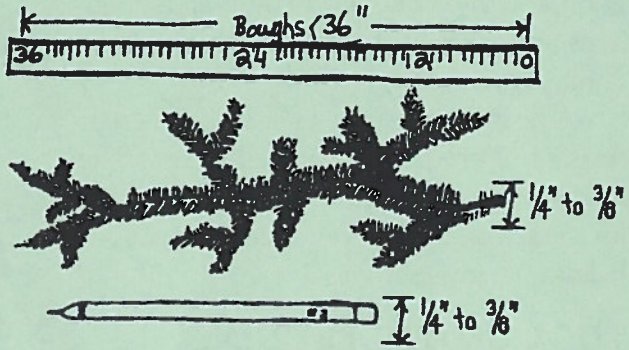
Boughs must have good needle coverage throughout the length of the bough.

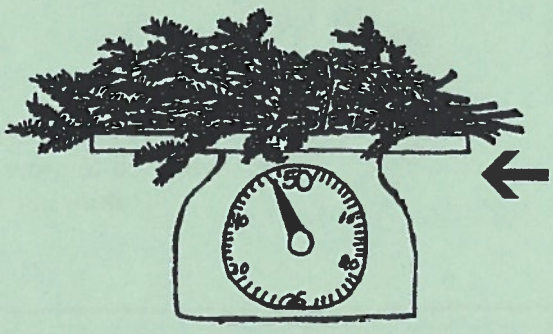
Boughs must be freshly cut, of good quality, and free of brown needles.

The preferred length of boughs is 24" to 30"

The maximum length of boughs is 30" to 36"

Harvested branches should have ends no larger in diameter than a pencil – 1/4" to 3/8"





The maximum weight of the bundles is 50 pounds; bundles must be securely tied with high quality twine.

Most importantly, before you harvest - think about the tree: its location, size, and health. Common sense today, will make economic cents, tomorrow.

REMEMBER: Minnesota has a trespass law. Private property is "private." Obtain permission from the property owner. On public lands, the necessary permits for government and reservation lands are not expensive and are easy to obtain.

Members of the Balsam Bough Partnership are united in their concern for the future of the balsam resource on public and private lands, and in their common interest in managing and utilizing the balsam fir resource sustainably. These guidelines are intended to ensure proper conservation and utilization practices.

Balsam Bough
PARTNERSHIP

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Mickman Brothers, Evergreen Industries, Nelson Nursery, tribal councils, bough harvesters, bough buyers, wreath makers, Chippewa National Forest, and the Beltrami, Itasca, and St. Louis County land departments.