

German scientists seek to clone perfect Xmas trees

The Associated Press

The hunt for the perfect Christmas tree may soon become a lot easier: just pick a nice clone.

That's what German scientists are now working on: They are searching a way to ensure that the sensitive saplings of the popular Nordmann fir species grow into impressive specimens.

The fir is native to the Caucasus, but is often cultivated on massive plantations in Germany.

Biologist Kurt Zoglauer of Berlin's Humboldt University said Friday 40 percent of trees don't make the cut when they mature after 10 to 14 years. Some are stunted by frost, while others turn out the wrong shade of green.

Zoglauer's team therefore hopes to refine a method to clone particularly hardy and beautiful trees by 2016.

The project is supported by a German government grant.

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