

New to the UK: Fair trade real Christmas trees

Fairwind* has teamed up with Danish Christmas tree grower *Bols Forstplanteskole* to bring the **first ever fair trade real Christmas trees to the UK*

“I am absolutely thrilled that fair trade has reached the poor cone pickers of Georgia. Fair Trees® is a wonderful project that helps improve the lives of many people in remote areas of Georgia, the country where I was born.”

- Katie Melua

Ethical issue

About 5 million Nordmann Fir Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year. But until now, very few people in the UK have been aware of the serious ethical issues behind buying these trees at Christmas. Although they are farmed in a responsible way the seeds for Nordmann Firs are sourced from natural forests, mainly in Georgia.

Harvesting of the seeds in Georgia is carried out by hand under remarkably primitive conditions. The Georgian cone pickers climb up 30 metre high fir trees in order to reach the seeds. They work entirely without safety equipment and in 2004 two workers fell to their death during the harvest. Several accidents happen each year, but despite working in such dangerous conditions the cone pickers are usually paid such low wages that it is difficult for them to support their families.



Georgian cone picker with her tools: her hands



A typical Georgian cone picker's cottage

Fair trees®

This Christmas *Fairwind* will be selling the first ever Fair Trees® in the UK - fair trade Nordmann Fir Christmas trees grown in Denmark. The trees are supplied by *Bols Forstplanteskole*, a successful Danish Christmas tree grower that achieved Danish fair trade accreditation in 2007 (see below). For the first time, consumers in the UK will be able to buy real Christmas trees with a clear conscience.

The trees are genuine Nordmann Fir trees of exceptional quality, grown using the best and ethically sourced seeds. They retain their needles exceptionally well and are no more expensive than other Nordmann Fir trees.

The following trees will be on sale this Christmas:



Fair Trees®

100-130cm (4') £28 plus £4 delivery

130-150cm (5') £33 plus £4 delivery

Ethical, high-quality and extremely convenient, these trees will be delivered to the customer ready to put into a stand; no need to chop off the end of the tree as this will already be done. Simply remove the tree from the box and place it where required. For an extra £5 we can also supply a wooden stand into which the tree can be simply slotted. The wood used for the stands is sustainably sourced.

Available to order on www.fairwindonline.com from the end of September these trees will be delivered in early December.



80cm - 90 cm (3') Potted Fair Tree®

£44 plus £4 delivery

Ethical, reusable, eco-friendly and convenient, these gorgeous little trees are pot grown and come in a pot. After Christmas they can be moved outdoors and re-used the following year, thus reducing waste and CO2 emissions. These trees are perfect for homes where there is little space. They also look great placed in front of the house or in the porch, and they are ideal for children's bedrooms.

Available to order on www.fairwindonline.com from the end of September, these trees will be delivered in early December.

130-150cm (5') and 175 -200cm (6') netted trees £28 and £44

A limited number of netted Christmas trees will be available from *Fairwind's* shop in Crouch End, North London. These trees will have the ends chopped off ready for placing in a stand. They will be available for collection from early December. A limited number of the potted trees will also be on sale at the *Fairwind* shop from early December.



The first 50 people to pre-order a fair trade Christmas tree will receive a handmade, fair trade silk star tree decoration worth £3.50. These stars are handmade in Cambodia by polio and landmine survivors, the perfect decoration for a fair trade Christmas tree.

Danish fair trade accreditation – The Bols Xmas Tree Fund

The Bols Xmas Tree Fund was founded in 2007, and shortly afterwards the Fair Trees® brand was certified by Fair Trade Denmark.

The Fund aims to create awareness about and improve the terrible conditions under which the Georgian cone pickers live and work. The Fund provides the cone pickers with Danish-made safety equipment and ensures that the workers are instructed on safety. In addition, the Fund works towards creating proper conditions for workers and their families through financial support for schools, books and health care. And of course the workers are paid a fair price for their work.

Katie Melua

Fairwind and the Fair Trees® project is supported by Katie Melua, the multi-platinum selling singer and songwriter, who was born in Georgia and lived there until she was 8 years old.

“I am absolutely thrilled that fair trade has reached the poor cone pickers of Georgia. Fair Trees® is a wonderful project that helps improve the lives of many people in remote areas of Georgia, the country where I was born. I urge anyone who loves a real Christmas tree to buy a fair trade one this year – after all, it won’t cost any more than a non-fair trade tree”.

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Notes for editors

Fairwind

This innovative company is owned and run by *Teresa Owen* and *Martin Abel* who are passionate about fair trade and providing affordable, quality fair trade gifts and accessories from around the world. In addition to their thriving online business they have a shop in Crouch End, London.

In 2007, *Fairwind* was shortlisted for an Observer Ethical Award and is a member of the British Association for Fair Trade Shops (BAFTS) – visit www.bafts.org.uk for more information.

Fairwind sells gifts, home products, jewellery, children's toys & clothing, bags, cushions, candles and garden accessories. To see *Fairwind's* full range, or for further information, visit www.fairwindonline.com or phone 020 8374 6254.

High-resolution images of all products are available and in many cases also cut-out images.

Fairwind has celebrity endorsement from Tamzin Outhwaite, Sheridan Smith and Beverley Knight:

"Fair trade makes a big difference to the lives of millions of people in the developing world, not just in farming but in the handicrafts and gifts industries too. Fairwind has an amazing range of ethical gifts from all over the world, combining modern design with traditional skills. Their gifts are all beautifully made and reasonably priced, so I will certainly be doing my Christmas shopping with them again this year."

- Tamzin Outhwaite

Bols Forstplanteskole

Established in 1989 by Marianne and Lars H. Bols, *Bols Forstplanteskole* has always been an innovator in the Christmas tree industry. Although both Marianne and Lars were studying at the time, they were excited by the forestry industry and by the challenges of supplying top quality products with the right provenances.

Their first business trip was to Georgia, in 1989, to buy 8 tons of Nordmann Fir seeds. As Georgia was then still part of the USSR, it was a long, tough battle to get the seeds and have them shipped to Denmark. But it was the start of a minor revolution in raising the quality of the Christmas trees coming onto the market. Marianne and Lars were moved by the generosity and warmth shown to them by the Georgian farmers: "Even though they were poor, they invited us in and many of them remain close friends. They were also one of the main reasons why we continue to collect seeds from Georgia." Another reason for continuing to do business in Georgia, despite the many obstacles, is that the Nordmann Fir seeds obtainable there are simply the best in the world.

Apart from providing a full-spectrum catalogue of plant and trees to a broad multinational market, Bols' more recent initiatives include organic and fair trade products: www.fairtrees.co.uk