The 2020 National Christmas Tree:
A Shining Example of Patriotism

For the past 57 years, GE Lighting has provided the lighting and design for the National Christmas Tree while part of General Electric. Now for the first year as part of Savant Systems Inc., GE Lighting, a Savant company will continue the privileged tradition for the 58th year.

In honor of our love for our country, this year’s patriotic design includes red, white and blue opaque lights in a larger, traditional style LED light bulb that are strung naturally around the tree, resulting in a simple, yet classic design. And no tree is complete without a topper. The dazzling six-sided, handcrafted 3D gold star features LED tape lighting and adorns the tree in celebration of the season.

This is the 12th year that GE LED lights, many of them Energy Star® certified, have been used exclusively in the lighting of the National Christmas Tree. New advancements in LED lighting offer the opportunity to create innovative designs and help utilize energy efficiencies. This year’s design includes 18,000 LED lights and only uses 3,500 watts. Each strand of the GE LED holiday lights uses nearly 80 percent less energy than traditional holiday lights, while providing the festive lighting.

GE Lighting, a Savant company is proud to partner with the National Park Foundation on the 2020 National Christmas Tree lighting and design.

The National Christmas Tree will be lit until 10:00pm Sunday through Thursday, and until 11:00pm Friday and Saturday through New Year’s Day.
While the COVID-19 pandemic precludes us from gathering in person for the first time, the National Christmas Tree remains a symbol of the festive season and a living witness to the history being made in our nation’s capital.

Enjoy the 98th annual lighting of the National Christmas Tree from the safety of your home, available on demand beginning December 3 at TheNationalTree.org

PROGRAM

Greetings
The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior
Margaret Everson, Counselor to the Secretary of the Interior
Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director for the National Park Service
Will Shafroth, President and CEO, National Park Foundation

Lighting of the National Christmas Tree
President Donald J. Trump and the First Family

Guest Performers
Colton Dixon
Jerrod Niemann
Jillian Cardarelli
Jillian Edwards
Kellie Pickler
Laine Hardy
Leaving Austin
Lynda Randle & Michael Tait
Matthew West
Melodie Malone
NPS Arrowhead Jazz Band
Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus
U.S. Navy Band Sea Chanters
“The President’s Own” United States Marine Band

Segments prerecorded
The history of the Lighting of the National Christmas Tree is intertwined with the history of America. Through peace and war, from national celebration to national mourning, Americans have gathered together and celebrated the season at this holiday event.

The first National Christmas Tree was placed on the Ellipse south of the White House in December 1923. The tree was a 48-foot Balsam fir donated by the President of Middlebury College in Vermont. At 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve, President Calvin Coolidge walked from the White House to the Ellipse to light the tree from his native state. The tree was decorated with 2,500 electric bulbs in red, white and green, donated by the Electric League of Washington. Music for this first lighting ceremony was provided by a local choir and a quartet from the U.S. Marine Band.

This first National Christmas Tree led to the tradition we celebrate today, even as the tree’s location and lighting ceremony have changed over the decades.

From 1924 to 1933 the tree, renamed the National Community Christmas Tree, was located in Sherman Park, south of the Treasury Building and southeast of the White House grounds. During these
years, simple lighting ceremonies and community singing were accompanied by the U.S. Marine Band. The National Park Service’s responsibilities for the lands and the tree ceremony began in 1933.

The years 1941 to 1953 found the National Christmas Tree on the South Lawn of the White House. In 1941, on December 24, only weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill led the lighting ceremony and addressed the crowd.

In 1954, the tree moved back to the Ellipse, where it has been located ever since. Also in 1954, the tree lighting became known as the Christmas Pageant of Peace, a celebration conceived by the Washington Board of Trade and the Washington Citizen’s Committee.

The tree lighting ceremony moved from Christmas Eve to earlier in December and was followed by three weeks of presentations by community groups on a stage at the Ellipse.

While the actual location of the tree in President’s Park has moved and the lighting ceremony program has evolved over the years, the purpose remains the same: to bring our local and national communities together to celebrate the season and share the universal message of peace during the holiday season.
In 1978, National Park Service horticulturalists searched for a perfect tree whose life had started under similar environmental conditions as those of Washington, D.C., and a tree that would be healthy and strong enough to survive a move to the Ellipse.

They found the tree in York, Pennsylvania, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Myers. It appeared to be the perfect shape and size, with no disease, and living in just the right soil. The tree had been planted by the Myers’ grandchildren. After discussions with the National Park Service horticulturalists, the Myers agreed to let their tree become the nation’s Christmas tree.

That tree had grown to over 42 feet, served as the National Christmas Tree for six different U.S. Presidents (Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama) and was featured in 33 annual National Christmas Tree Lighting events before being toppled by a strong wind gust on February 19, 2011.

On March 19, 2011, the National Park Service completed the planting of a new National Christmas Tree, exactly one month to the day after the previous National Christmas Tree was felled. This new National Christmas Tree was a 26-foot-tall Colorado blue spruce from a tree nursery in New Jersey.
The tree served as the National Christmas Tree for one Tree Lighting Ceremony in December 2011. Unfortunately, that tree died of transplant shock and was removed on May 5, 2012.

On October 27, 2012, National Park Service horticulturalists completed the planting of a new National Christmas Tree. That National Christmas Tree is a Colorado blue spruce—the same species as the previous two trees—and, just like the 1978 tree, came to the Ellipse from a private residence, this time from nearby Virginia. That tree was irreparably damaged in 2018 when an individual attempted to climb it.

Last year, yet another new tree was planted on the Ellipse. The 30-foot Colorado blue spruce from Palmyra, Pennsylvania, was lit last year for the first time by President Trump and the First Family.

Christmas is always a special time in and around the White House and, while the COVID-19 pandemic precludes us from gathering in person, the National Christmas Tree remains a symbol of the festive season and a living witness to the history being made in our nation’s capital. Audiences around the world will join us for this 98-year-old tradition, webcast on the internet for all to enjoy.

To learn more about the history and view archival photos of previous tree lighting ceremonies, go to TheNationalTree.org.
MORE THAN 1,500 SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM EACH U.S. STATE, TERRITORY, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HAVE GIVEN OF THEIR TIME AND TALENTS TO DESIGN AND CREATE ORNAMENTS REPRESENTING THEIR HOME STATE OR TERRITORY FOR THE AMERICA CELEBRATES DISPLAY SURROUNDING THE NATIONAL TREE.

Alabama
Shelby County High School

Alaska
IDEA Homeschool

American Samoa
Lupelele Elementary School

Arizona
Pinnacle High School

Arkansas
Wooster Elementary School

California
Riverside STEM Academy

Colorado
Meeker High School

Connecticut
Berlin Public Schools

Delaware
Newark High School

District of Columbia
Columbia Heights Education Campus

Florida
Port Salerno Elementary School

Georgia
Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School

Guam
Agana Heights Elementary School

Hawaii
Governor Wallace Rider Farrington High School

Idaho
Mountain Home High School

Illinois
Richland County Community Unit School District

Indiana
Brown County High School

Iowa
Karen Acres Elementary School

Kansas
Rolling Ridge Elementary School

Kentucky
Dishman-McGinnis Elementary School

Louisiana
Parkway Elementary School
Maine
Regional School Unit #38

Maryland
Hyattsville Middle School

Massachusetts
All Saints Academy

Michigan
Brimley Area School District

Minnesota
St. Alphonsus Catholic School

Mississippi
Terry High School

Missouri
Nixa Public School

Montana
The Polaris School

Nebraska
Chadron Public School

Nevada
Damonte Ranch High School

New Hampshire
Amherst Middle School

New Jersey
Delaware Township School

New Mexico
Harrison Schmitt Elementary School

New York
Champlain Valley Educational Services

North Carolina
West Buncombe Elementary School

North Dakota
Kindred Public School District

Northern Mariana Islands
Grace Christian Academy

Ohio
Liberty Tree Elementary School

Oklahoma
Jenks High School

Oregon
Howard Street Charter School

Pennsylvania
Neshaminy School District

Puerto Rico
Escuela Dr. Francisco Hernández y Gaetán

Rhode Island
Frank E. Thompson Middle School

South Carolina
J.G. McCracken Middle School

South Dakota
Hill City High School

Tennessee
Beaumont Magnet Academy Elementary School

Texas
Caldwell High School

Utah
Union High School

Vermont
Milton Town School District

U.S. Virgin Islands
St. Croix Educational Complex High School

Virginia
Appomattox Regional Governor’s School for the Arts and Technology

Washington
Tukes Valley Middle School

West Virginia
Robert L. Bland Middle School

Wisconsin
St. Thomas More High School

Wyoming
West Elementary School
IN APPRECIATION

The 2020 National Christmas Tree Lighting is presented by the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation, with the generous support of the following companies:

The National Christmas Tree Lighting is a production of Pleasant Street Entertainment and LKJ Productions:

Kristi Foley  Jason Seagrove  Tommy Duncan  Brandon Smith  Peter Shedleski
Leon Knoles  Elise Perry  Hannah Oneida  Jeffrey Higgs  Brian Dziura
Taylor Cernansky  Don McClurkin  Rusty Lee  Mike Ducassoux  TNDV
Matt Russell  Sewell Johnson  Julian Francis  Max Jeffers  Bella Faccia Inc.
Larry Boshers  Mike Peters  James Boore  Jabari Jefferson  Uppercut
Thom Peachee  Doug McKinley  Olivier Revel  Rod McDonald  22 Degrees
Dave Thibodeau  Darryl Player  Andy Bell  Peter Marengo  Joe Corbin
Ryen Watkins  Martin Whittier  J.J. Hacker  Curren Bennett  Program:
Tosha Potter  Chris McCrary  Joe Foster  Susan Kelleher  J.W. Arnold
Keziah Potter  Joseph Kurtz  Andrew Humphries

Special thanks to Mountain Top Fraser Fir, Santa’s Choice Tree Farm, and Merlyn Farms for donating the trees lining the America Celebrates display.

The National Park Service and the National Park Foundation would like to thank their staff members, as well as their partners in the White House Visitors Office, who have contributed their time and talent to the production of the event.
Working together with a growing community of passionate park champions, the National Park Foundation strives to ensure that all people are able to discover their own personal sense of wonder and connection to parks, because they don’t just stand for where America has been – they inspire where we go next.

Get involved at nationalparks.org