



Norfolk pine – A tropical Christmas tree

by Esther McGinnis
NDSU Extension Horticulturist

Despite my best intentions, I am always stressed by this point in the holiday season. As a mom, I feel the societal pressure to transform into Martha Stewart to create the ultimate holiday for my family. The only problem is that I don’t have Martha’s team of assistants to tastefully decorate the house, buy the perfect gifts and bake cookies that taste as delectable as they look.

In the real world, a nasty respiratory virus can derail a household’s holiday preparations. Our artificial Christmas tree and decorations remain packed in the closet. This year, I am going to give myself a little grace and use our Norfolk Island pine as a living Christmas tree. No assembly required!

The Norfolk Island pine is a slow-growing tropical conifer that is perfectly suited as a low-maintenance houseplant. Although it can reach heights of 200 feet in its native range, this houseplant typically grows to a height of 5-8 feet tall indoors over a decade. The combination of limited sunlight and soil creates a natural bonsai effect. Despite its tropical origins, the Norfolk Island pine is tolerant of low-light conditions found in homes.

I will divulge a little-known secret to our Dakota Gardener readers – the Norfolk Island pines that are sold in the houseplant trade are mislabeled due to an old taxonomic mistake. Instead, most of the houseplants that we see are Cook pines.

The Cook pine has a fascinating history of global exploration. Captain James Cook’s expedition discovered this species in New Caledonia in the South Pacific. Observing the tall, straight trunks, the expedition brought seeds to



With proper care and occasional repotting, a Norfolk pine will last as a houseplant for many years. Pexels photo.

Hawaii in 1774 to be planted to produce ship masts. Unfortunately, the beautiful Hawaiian climate caused the trees to grow faster and become too spindly for use in shipbuilding.

Fast forward to today – the American nursery industry travels to Oahu, Hawaii, to harvest Cook pine cones for the houseplant market. I’m sure it’s a real hardship! The intrepid workers shimmy up 100-foot-tall trees to harvest the football-sized seed cones to send to Florida nurseries. Several seeds are planted in each container because seed germination is uncertain. The trees are pruned to create a well-branched structure and grown for two or more years, depending upon their intended market size.

The Cook pine has been getting a lot of scientific

attention lately. Scientists noticed that trees growing in southern California and Florida landscapes have a distinctive lean to the south, while southern hemisphere trees lean toward the north. This scientific study revealed that Cook pines bend toward the equator, and the angle increases with latitude.

The trees in Hawaii lean slightly because of their closer proximity to the equator. The mechanism for this trait is still being studied.

If you decide to buy a Norfolk Island/Cook pine, keep the soil moist but not saturated. Water when the top 2 inches of soil have dried. Also, keep away from drafts. With proper care and occasional repotting, this houseplant will last for many years.



Savvy Senior

by Jim Miller

Chair yoga: safe, simple and beneficial for older adults

Dear Savvy Senior,
I’ve been hearing a lot about chair yoga lately. My New Year’s resolution is to improve my health and get moving again, but I have trouble getting down on the floor. What can you tell me about this type of yoga?
Arthritic Abby

Dear Abby,
If you’re looking for a safe way to get active again but find traditional exercise routines difficult, chair yoga may be the perfect fit. Chair yoga is a gentle form of yoga that’s done either sitting on a chair or using the chair for support while standing. It adapts traditional yoga poses so they’re accessible to people who may have limited mobility, balance issues or difficulty getting down on the floor.

This practice helps improve flexibility, strength, and balance, boosts circulation and mobility, and promotes relaxation while reducing stress. This makes it an effective and safe way to stay active and support overall well-being at any age.

A typical chair yoga session begins with simple seated postures, such as gentle twists, stretches for the arms and legs, or movements that open the hips and shoulders. These exercises loosen stiff joints, improve posture and increase flexibility in areas of the body that often become tight with age.

It can also include standing poses like modified lunges or gentle balance work, with the chair always nearby for stability. Breathing exercises are often incorporated throughout the practice, encouraging participants

to slow down, deepen their breath and cultivate a sense of calm. Sessions usually end with a short period of guided relaxation or meditation, leaving participants refreshed and grounded.

How to get started

To get started, you just need a sturdy chair without wheels and preferably without arms, and some comfortable clothes. The goal with chair yoga is to stretch, not cause pain. So go only as far as feels comfortable and don’t push beyond your limits.

If possible, consider joining a local chair yoga class. Many local senior centers, YMCAs and community recreation centers offer chair yoga as part of their wellness or fitness programs. Some yoga studios and gyms may offer gentle yoga or chair yoga too. And if you’re enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, you may be able to access classes for free through SilverSneakers.com.

If attending an in-person class isn’t an option, you can also practice chair yoga at home. There are chair yoga apps and many videos you can access on YouTube to guide you through a routine.

Chair exercise options

As an alternative to chair

yoga, there are chair exercises you can add to your routine that can help improve strength and balance, reduce joint pain and prevent falls.

To execute some of these exercises, you’ll need some resistance equipment like light dumbbells, water bottles, soup cans or resistance bands.

- Sit-to-stand: For this exercise, sit at the edge of the chair, feet hip-width apart. Stand up without using your hands, then slowly sit back down. Use hands lightly on the chair or use a walker or cane if needed for support.
- Seated marches: Sit tall and alternate lifting one knee at a time toward your chest.
- Seated bicep curls: With elbows tucked in, curl weights toward shoulders, then lower with control.
- Seated overhead press: Press weights overhead from shoulder height, then slowly lower.
- Seated leg extensions: Extend one leg straight out and hold for 2-3 seconds, then lower and repeat.
- Heel raises: Lift heels off the floor, pause, and lower back down.

For noticeable benefits, these exercises should be performed at least three days a week, doing three sets of 8 to 12 repetitions.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

HISTORY OF NEW ROCKFORD

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On July 22, 1908, Mr. and Mrs. F.L. Thompson and family left for Wheaton, Minn., where he would run a farm machinery business. That night as a thunderstorm rolled through the area, lightning struck the cupola of the big cattle barn on the J.A. Wren farm southeast of New Rockford, tore a hole in the roof, went through the hay mow (no hay caught fire) and out a wall near the ground, scattering shingles and siding up to ten rods (55 yards) from the building.

The July 24, 1908, “Transcript” contained a series of resolutions passed by the members of the Congregational Church, extolling the virtues of the late Lizzie M. Biggs.

Due to his leaving town, George W. Streeter had the following for sale: a Majestic Steel Range, a Quick Meal gasoline stove, one large hard coal heater, bedroom furniture, a dining room set, carpet, rugs, a bookcase, a library table and other items.

Dr. C.J. McNamara of Barlow had sold his drugstore there to George C. Wellner of Anamoose and would soon move to a new city.

The previous week, Dr. R.A. Bolton, a graduate of the American School of Osteopathy of Chicago arrived and obtained offices on the second floor of the Frank Allmaras building just north of the Farmers & Merchants Bank; his family would arrive in a few days. [Osteopathy is an alternative medical field that emphasizes manipulation of the bones, joints and muscles.]

On the morning of July 24, word was received of the death of an “aged lady,” Mrs. Nancy Kelly, at the home of her daughter Mrs. Patrick Cain on the J.T. West farm near Morris; her funeral was in Carrington on July 27.

Until 1 p.m. on July 25, Will A. Anderson, clerk of the Riverside School District #7, received sealed bids for the construction of two school houses. That evening, some 50 of his friends gathered to help County Judge D.F. Ellsworth celebrate his 72nd birthday at a “smoke social” in his home. Mr. and Mrs. Ellsworth were the recipients of a clock, lamp, vinegar cruet and a pipe.

On Sunday, July 26, W.A. Hart, the son of E.C. Hart of Streeter & Cooling, arrived from Rockford, Ill., to work in the New Rockford branch of that firm. That afternoon,

a fire started in the Schuster Confectionary. Although the NRFD arrived very quickly and extinguished the blaze, the entire stock was destroyed by the fire, smoke and chemicals, and the building’s interior sustained considerable damage.

On July 27, Frank Lies and Pauline Mathis, both of New Rockford, obtained a marriage license. A group of people went down to the river to fish. While most of the group caught very few fish, Mrs. Grover Mabb and Mrs. Verne Norton pulled in 58 fish between them.

On July 28, Gottlieb Betger came in from west of town with a bad case of blood poisoning which began in a small cut on his hand and then spread into the arm; on August 1 he left for Fargo, where he would undergo treatment which might include an operation. Mrs. C.J. Maddux and daughter Kathrynine (Kathryn?) and Doris arrived from St. Paul and awaited the arrival of their household goods. Ralph Beebe, J. Harvey Johnson, Monte Biggs and Andrew Johnson went to Melville, where they were joined by Miss Maggie L. VanScholack of that place and the quintet played for a church benefit. Axle Johnson went to Fargo to consult about an ailment.

On the evening of July 29, two members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints appeared on the streets of New Rockford, singing hymns, extolling the virtues of their religion and defending it from charges of promoting polygamy. Also that evening a son was born to Academy professor and Mrs. M.E. Beebe.

An order from N.D. Governor John Burke instituted a Field Hospital Corps within the N.D. National Guard, and physical exams for that unit would be given in New Rockford at 8 a.m. July 30.

On the evening of July 30, there was a barn dance at the E.S. Dunham farm.

The July 31, 1908, “Transcript” stated that the bell of the east Tiffany school, which had disappeared some time before, had mysteriously

reappeared “the other night.”

An ad: Dr. R.A. Bolton, Osteopath, treats all acute and chronic diseases, office and residence in the new Allmaras building one door north of the Farmers & Merchants Bank, Telephone 1-5. O.M. Pomranke of the Sheyenne area had a good heavy young draft team and a mare in foal for sale.

For several days that week, John Hilbert was hauling lumber to his farm west of New Rockford for a large elevator.

On the evening of July 31 and the morning of August 1, the New Rockford baseball team played a double header at Minnewaukan. Game 1: Minnewaukan-York-Brinsmade, 4, New Rockford, 3. (The “Transcript” blamed the loss on the “near-sightedness” of the umpire from Brinsmade, who made “some distinctly rotten decisions”); Game 2: New Rockford, 5, M-Y-B, 1. The New Rockford batteries were Nierling and C. Boyer in the first game and Kennedy and C. Boyer in game 2.

On the morning of August 1, Mr. and Mrs. G.W. Streeter left in their large Wolfe touring car for their new home at Rockford, Ill., where Mr. Streeter would be in charge of the land business for the Streeter & Cooling Co. Mrs. John A. Mulvey accompanied them, intending to go as far as Barnesville, Minn., where she would visit her sister Mrs. F.E. Diemer and family. Near Wheatland, N.D. with the car traveling at 30 m.p.h., Mr. Streeter lost control on the gravel, and they went into the ditch. The car had only slight damage, Mr. and Mrs. Streeter were just shaken up, but Mrs. Mulvey was thrown from the vehicle and broke two bones in her right hand and a bone in her thumb. They drove to Dr. Darrow’s office in Fargo, where he set the bones, and the three friends continued on to Barnesville. After a short visit with the Diemers, Mr. and Mrs. Streeter continued on their way.

[Mrs. Mulvey was the first New Rockford resident to be involved in a documented auto accident.]

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