Evergreen Season

All the beautiful Christmas trees, pine boughs, wreaths and holiday decorations we enjoy at this time of year come from evergreens. Their leaves stay green on the plant year-round. This week, The Mini Page learns more about these beautiful plants.

A sign of life
For thousands of years, evergreen trees and bushes have been symbols, signs, of hope during the dark, cold winters. Ancient people decorated their homes with evergreen branches during the winter solstice (SOL- stice), or the shortest day of the year. (The solstice happens on Dec. 21 or 22 each year.)

Trees stayed green in the winter, even when other plants looked dead, reminded people that spring would come again. Ancient people hung evergreen branches over their doors and windows to protect their families and keep out evil spirits.

Christmas trees
In the 1500s, Christians began bringing evergreen boughs and trees into their homes at Christmas time. They added decorations, such as eggs, fruits, and candles. People later switched to electric lights.

Although some Christmas trees are still harvested from the forest, about 98% are now grown on Christmas tree farms. Evergreens take from seven to 10 years to grow big enough to be used as Christmas trees.

Evergreens have a different way of surviving. They keep their leaves on. As the weather turns colder, chemicals in evergreens begin to change. Special parts of their leaves change fats, proteins and sugars into a kind of antifreeze. This antifreeze substance allows the Christmas tree to stay on the tree during the cold winter.

Try ’n’ Find
Words that remind us of evergreen trees are hidden in this puzzle. Try “n” Find

Cook’s Corner
Roasted Sweet Potatoes
You’ll need:
• 1/4 cup canola oil
• 3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
• 2 tablespoons brown sugar

What to do:
2. Place cut sweet potatoes in heated oil and bake for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through.
3. Meanwhile, mix together brown sugar and spices. Add brown sugar mixture to potatoes and stir to coat. Roast for another 10 minutes until potatoes are light brown.
4. Drain potatoes on paper towels; transfer to a serving dish and sprinkle with lime juice. Serves 6

For later:
Try this recipe in place of potatoes for your Christmas table. Your family is sure to love it.

Mini Jokes
Teddy: What did the beaver say to the Christmas tree?
Twink: “Been nice graving you!”

Resources
On the Web:
• bchy/MEvergreens

Eco Note
Thousands of rhinos, bred in an unsuccessful attempt to reduce the impact of poaching, or illegal hunting, will soon be released in the African savanna. The African Parks organization says it will release the entire population of about 2,000 white rhinos across Africa during the next 10 years. Experts say that before the animals can be released, they need to be toughened up for life in the wild and taught how to find food in their new homes. The rhinos may also be targeted by poachers there for their valuable horns. For more information, visit Earthweek.com.