The Historical Christmas Tree

Decorating with evergreen plants, like pine trees and holly, during winter has been a long tradition. Modern Christmas trees originated in Germany in the 1500s. When Germans immigrated to the United States, they brought the Christmas tree tradition with them. Even though many German homes in America celebrated Christmas with decorated trees, most other families did not. It wasn't popular to have a Christmas tree in the United States until the mid-1800s when the popular and fashionable Queen Victoria in England was pictured in the newspaper with Prince Albert and their children decorating a royal tree. Soon, many American families wanted to have a Christmas tree. Christmas trees were decorated with homemade ornaments and items from nature, such as berries, fruit, and popcorn. Trees were lit with candles and, later, electric lights. If a family had enough money, it might have a few store-bought ornaments on the tree. Many families also hid small gifts and presents in the tree branches.

Decorate this 19th century (1800s) Christmas tree with the items listed below.

Homemade items

Paper lanterns

Paper cornucopias

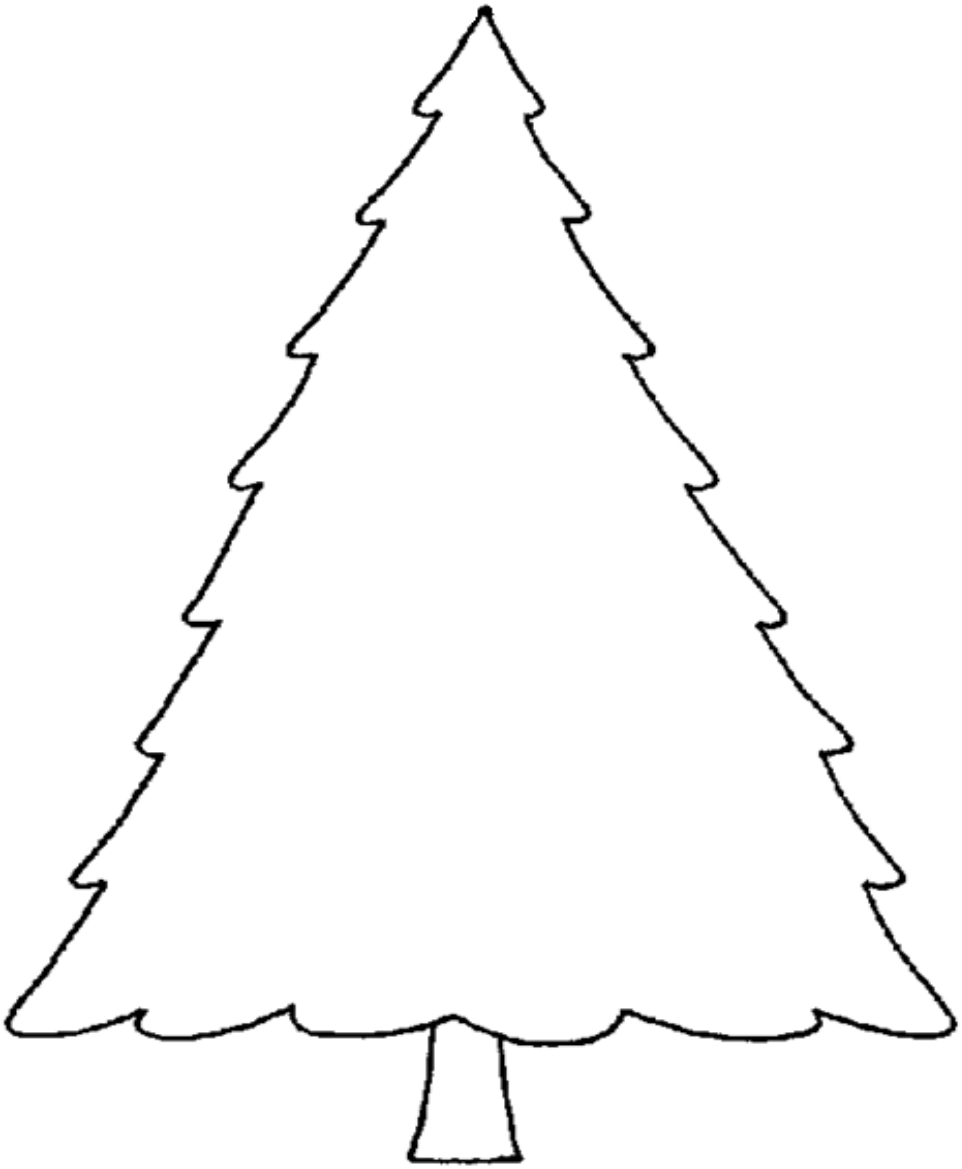
Paper fans

Candles

One or two store-bought ornaments

Small gifts

Natural Decorations

Berry garland

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