

# MARY PICKFORD'S CHRISTMAS TREES

A LIVING TREE FOR EVERY CHILD IS GOAL OF BEVERLY HILLS, "HOME OF THE STARS"

By WILLOUGHBY WELSH



Every child will have a living Christmas Tree if Mary Pickford realizes her dream. Here she is shown helping a young neighbor prepare for the holiday season.

**A**LIVING Christmas tree for every child! This is the dream of Mary Pickford, noted film actress, who is a true lover of trees. When a child is born, Mary Pickford believes, a tree suitable for decorating as a Christmas tree should be planted in the yard or garden, and the tree named for that child. In this way, every youthful member of the household will have his or her own tree to enjoy in youth and to cherish in memory all through life.

The dream was revealed by Miss Pickford in an address before the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. Under her sponsorship as Honorary Chairman of the Christmas Trees Committee of the Chamber, 190 cities and towns in Southern California were requested to promote outdoor Christmas

tree projects. To make doubly sure that her own city, Beverly Hills, would do its part, Miss Pickford sent out more than a thousand letters asking her friends and neighbors to join in decorating trees for the holiday season.

The Christmas out-of-doors idea in Beverly Hills is claimed to have been originated eight years ago by the Reverend Robert M. Donaldson, who decorated and lighted a tree at his community church. Around the festive tree his congregation gathered to express the gratitude and joy which the Christmas season symbolizes. Several witnesses of the beauty of this first living tree decided to decorate trees the following year. The movement did not, however, gain momentum until Miss Pickford and the chambers of commerce gave it widespread publicity in 1928. That year a 75-foot deodar, native of the Himalaya Mountains, and now standing in a prominent location in Beverly Gardens, was chosen as Beverly Hills' official Christmas tree. It was illuminated, and a program of dedication was held under the spread of its graceful branches.

This being an important event in the community life of Beverly Hills, Will Rogers, now self-styled Mayor Emeritus, sent Mary Pickford a message to be sure to get home from New York in time to turn on the lights of the big Christmas tree. Each year since, Miss Pickford has performed this civic rite, while all the community joins in the singing of Christmas carols. It is, indeed, an inspiring and impressive



beginning to the celebration of Christianity's greatest festal occasion.

There are at present eight hundred trees within the city limits of Beverly Hills that are especially decorated and illuminated each holiday season. With a population of 18,000, this makes an average of one tree for every twenty-three persons or every five homes. Beverly Hills, therefore, holds the highest known average for live Christmas trees of any city or community in the world. The number of trees increases from year to year as neighbors catch the spirit of the Christmas out-of-doors, and as new members arrive in the various homes, for each new-born babe must have its own tree. The trees vary from two to fifty or sixty feet in height. When the latter are located on hillside estates and brilliantly illuminated at night, as many were last year, they are enjoyed by residents and visitors for miles around.

The pine, perhaps because of its sturdiness and the ease with which the lights may be strung and adjusted, is one of the most popular selections for Christmas trees. But the faster-growing *deodars* have been chosen in several instances where owners of new homes wished to join more quickly the community Christmas celebration. Spruce and fir are also decorated for the holiday season. Often at a new home, or at one where there is no tree, residents use trees in tubs, the trees later being planted in their permanent locations. In gardens where Spanish or desert effects are rigidly adhered to, the owners string lights on cactus plants and palms to show their community cooperation and Christmas spirit.

This year, on December 24, it is planned to use an electric switch to turn on the lights of the big city tree and those on many trees in the surrounding neighborhood. Everyone in



Beverly Hills has one outdoor living Christmas tree for every twenty-three of its 18,000 population. Many of them, as the one above, occupy prominent hilltop locations and may be viewed for miles.

the city intending to illuminate a tree will be notified of the hour when the switch on this down-town hookup will be operated so that all may light their trees at the same time. This will, indeed, present a novel and interesting effect when the myriads of lighted trees make their dramatic appearance against the dark curtain of the night.