

How Christmas trees are made: Video Zone - transcript

Watch the video at <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/freetime/video-zone/how-christmas-trees-are-made>

The last 20 years have seen a huge increase in the Chinese economy, thanks partly to Christmas trees. The tradition of Christmas trees is believed to have begun in Germany around the 18th century, but it was Queen Victoria who made them fashionable in Britain when she was pictured standing next to one with her family in 1846.

This factory in Suzhou makes 'sheng dan shu', as they call them, in all sorts of sizes. And this is how they produce a two-metre-high version.

The branches start out as flat strips of polyvinyl chloride, or PVC to you and me. The reels are unravelled and as they pass through rollers they're bonded and stick together.

Then a circular blade slices through the PVC, shredding it and making the needles. The shredded PVC is twisted around a metal wire and then pulled through a small coil. This separates the needles and makes them nice and bushy.

These machines produce branches measuring around six metres long. A tree with branches this big isn't very practical, so they're cut to size by hand. They're cut this way because a mechanical cutting machine would flatten the needles back down.

A bunch of branches are then sewn together using a polypropylene twine, and the sharp edges are bent over to stop little children hurting themselves as they hang their baubles from the tree.

Now all that's left to do is attach the branches to the metal trunks of the tree and it becomes one of the one million sheng dan shu that are made here at this factory in China. Happy Christmas!