

Christmas Tree Tips

Here are some tips for care of your fresh cut tree or dug tree.

Cut Trees

After purchasing a fresh-cut tree of your choice, there are some steps you can take that will keep it fresh and ensure a safe and attractive tree. If you aren't planning to take the tree inside for decorating immediately after bringing it home, store it outside in a cool, shady place sheltered from drying winds. If possible, cut off about a one one-inch section diagonally from the butt of the tree, and place the tree in a container of water. The fresh cut will help the tree to absorb water and stay fresh, and is necessary if a tree has sealed itself over by standing out of water. Sprinkling the needles daily with water until the tree is put inside will also be helpful.

When it is time to use the tree, saw the trunk again, but this time cut straight across and square off the butt. This will help the tree to stand up straight. It will also help it absorb water.

A tree in a warm room will absorb as much as four pints of water a day, which is lost by evapotranspiration through the needles. As a result the tree should be checked daily, and water should be added as needed. The larger the container, the less frequently water will have to be added. thus it is best to select a tree stand that will hold the tree firmly and can contain a generous amount of water. It is important to realize that trees begin to lose their moisture as soon as they are cut. A freshly cut tree will have a high moisture content, assuring longer needle retention and reduced risk of fire. **A tree that has become dry will not recover even if standing in water.**

Many home remedies exist to help trees hold their needles and deter fire, including such treatments as adding sugar, aspirin or other chemicals to the tree's water. None of these have been proven to have any significant effect, and some treatments can actually hinder the uptake of water and make trees dry out sooner. We recommend the procedure described here to keep a tree moist and healthy for several weeks.

Dug Trees

If you prefer to use a live tree for the Christmas season, to be planted after the holidays, your tree will require particular attention and proper care to assure survival on planting. Here are some suggestions for its care:

- Before bringing the tree indoors, condition it by moving it into an unheated, protected place such as a garage, carport, basement or utility building.
- Once the tree is inside, keep the root ball moist, but avoid putting it in standing water (keep it in a washtub or similar waterproof container.) Wrapping the burlapped ball in plastic will keep the soil ball moist while indoors. (Remove the plastic before planting outdoors.)
- **Limit the tree's stay indoors to no more than a week to ten days.**
- It is often helpful to already have a planting site selected and a hole dug before the holidays and a thorough freeze.
- If the temperature is 20°F or above, the tree can be planted immediately after removal from the home. Still, it might be better to condition it a little. Move the tree to a sheltered area such as a garage, carport etc. for several days (keeping it watered) before planting. Unless the planting site is sheltered, it might be best to hold the tree in this protected location until severe weather has passed.
- Plant the tree carefully and well in a large hole (the diameter should be about 12" larger than the diameter of the ball.) Tend just as any other transplanted yard or landscape plant. Remove any plastic wrapping from the balled roots and loosen the burlap (but leave it on.)
- Prevent the roots from drying out and protect the tree from extreme weather conditions-particularly wind, which can make a tree dry out faster.

Purchasing a live tree and following the care and precaution measures discussed above should ensure an attractive tree that will stay fresh indoors for more than a week and outdoors for many years.

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