

**The following and additional information can be found at www.christmastree.org.
A link is available on the Links page of our website.**

How to Care for Your Farm-Grown Fresh Christmas Tree

When a Christmas tree is cut, over half of its weight is water. With proper care, you can maintain the quality of your displayed trees. Below are a number of tips relating to the care of displayed trees:

1. Displaying trees in water in a traditional reservoir type stand is the most effective way of maintaining their freshness and minimizing needle loss problems.
2. Make a fresh cut to remove about a 1/2-inch thick disk of wood from the base of the trunk before putting the tree in the stand. Make the cut perpendicular to the stem axis. Don't cut the trunk at an angle, or into a v-shape, which makes it far more difficult to hold the tree in the stand and also reduces the amount of water available to the tree.
3. Once home, place the tree in water as soon as possible. Most species can go 6 to 8 hours after cutting the trunk and still take up water. Don't bruise the cut surface or get it dirty.
4. If needed, trees can be temporarily stored for several days in a cool location. Place the freshly cut trunk in a bucket that is kept full of water.
5. To display the trees indoors, use a stand with an adequate water holding capacity for the tree. **As a general rule, stands should provide 1 quart of water per inch of stem diameter.** Devices are available that help maintain a constant water level in the stand.
6. Use a stand that fits your tree. Avoid whittling the sides of the trunk down to fit a stand. The outer layers of wood are the most efficient in taking up water and should not be removed.
7. Keep displayed trees away from sources of heat (fireplaces, heaters, heat vents, direct sunlight). Lowering the room temperature will slow the drying process, resulting in less water consumption each day.
8. The temperature of the water used to fill the stand is not important and does not affect water uptake.
9. Check the stand daily to make sure that the level of water does not go below the base of the tree. **With many stands, there can still be water in the stand even though the base of the tree is no longer submerged in water.**
10. Drilling a hole in the base of the trunk does not improve water uptake.
11. Use of lights that produce low heat, such as miniature lights, will reduce drying of the tree.
12. Always inspect light sets prior to placing them on the tree. If worn, replace with a new set.
13. Do not overload electrical circuits.
14. Always turn off the tree lights when leaving the house or when going to bed.
15. Monitor the tree for freshness. After Christmas or if the tree is dry, remove it from the house.
16. Go to www.realchristmastrees.org and type in your ZIP code to find a recycling program near you.
17. Never burn any part of a Christmas tree in a wood stove or fireplace.

Prepared by Dr. Gary Chastagner and Dr. Eric Hinesley

Edited by the Scientific Research Committee of the National Christmas Tree Association

The following and additional information can be found at <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/1996/11-8-1996/cmtree.html>, or by following the link on Knollwood's Link page.

Last updated 1/13/98 by [John VanDyk](#)
<http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/1996/11-8-1996/cmtree.html>

Live Christmas Trees

For many individuals, planting a live Christmas tree into the landscape after the holidays has a special appeal. Unfortunately, planting evergreens in winter is a difficult proposition. Our harsh, winter weather (extreme cold, rapidly fluctuating temperatures, and dry winds) is often too much for the tree to endure.

If you are considering a live tree for Christmas, proper preparation and care of the tree are essential. Transplanting success can be increased by following the steps outlined below.

1. Choose a suitable planting site for the tree in the fall. The site should provide adequate space for the tree to grow and develop.
2. Prepare the planting site in the fall before the ground freezes. Remove the soil and place in a warm location. Fill the hole with straw.
3. Select a healthy tree from a local nursery or garden center. When purchasing a balled and burlapped tree, choose a tree with a solid soil ball. A small tree is less expensive and easier to handle. (The size and weight of a large tree can make lugging the tree into the house and through doorways a real challenge.) A small tree also has a much better chance of survival.
4. Store the tree in a cool garage, shed, or porch if it is purchased two or three weeks before Christmas. Make sure the soil ball is kept moist, but does not freeze. If the temperature in the storage area may drop below freezing, place straw or other insulating materials around the soil ball to prevent it from freezing.
5. Before bringing a balled and burlapped tree indoors, wrap the soil ball in plastic or place it in a tub. Place the tree in a cool location within the home. Avoid sites near heat sources, such as a fireplace, registers, etc.
6. The tree should be kept indoors for only a short period. The shorter the tree's stay indoors, the better its chances of survival when planted outdoors. The maximum stay indoors should be 7 to 10 days. If the tree is kept indoors for a longer period, the buds may break dormancy. When planted outdoors, the succulent new growth will be killed by cold temperatures.
7. Carefully decorate the tree. Ornaments, tinsel, and lights (preferably the miniature types) can be used. Don't apply flocking or artificial snow to the tree.
8. Keep the soil ball moist throughout the tree's stay indoors. Check the soil daily and water as needed.
9. Shortly after Christmas, remove the tree from the house and place it in a cool location. (Don't place the tree directly outdoors. The sharply colder temperatures outdoors may injure the tree.) A brief stay in a cool garage, shed, etc., allows the tree to become gradually acclimated to cooler temperatures. The soil ball should not be allowed to freeze during this period.
10. On a relatively mild winter day, remove the straw from the planting area and plant the tree outdoors. Water well and mulch the area heavily to prevent the soil from freezing immediately.



Home gardeners should carefully consider the requirements and risks associated with a live Christmas tree. An evergreen can be successfully planted outdoors after the holidays. However, proper site preparation and good tree care are essential.