



CHRISTMAS TREE AND HOLLY CARE

Cut Christmas Trees

A freshly cut tree is best because it keeps its color longer and is less of a fire hazard in the home. If possible, buy a tree with a high moisture content. Try these methods to determine the moisture content of a tree:

- Break a small branch between your fingers. If the branch breaks easily, the tree or that part of the tree is too dry and may be a high fire risk in the home.
- Tapping the tree trunk on the ground can indicate a tree's vitality. If an abundance of needles drop from the tree, much of the tree is dangerously dry.
- Needles that bend and cannot be easily pulled from tree branches are a good indication that the tree is fresh.

After bringing the tree home, immediately saw at least two inches off the base of the tree. This exposes fresh tissue that will readily absorb water. If the tree is to be stored for any time before being moved indoors, stand the tree trunk in a container filled with water. If the tree will be displayed immediately, set the trunk in a tree stand designed to hold water.

After putting the tree indoors, fill the stand with water and keep it filled for as long as the tree remains in the home. Some tree stands hold only a small amount of water, so be certain to fill these stands every day. Use lukewarm water. The following precautions will keep the tree fresh and safe while in the home:

- Locate the tree away from heat sources such as heat registers and radiators.
- Place trees away from doors. In the event of a fire, the tree could block the escape route from the room.
- The cooler the room temperature, the longer the tree will stay fresh in the house. Consider lowering the thermostat a few degrees until after the holidays.
- Consider stabilizing tall trees with guy wires to the ceiling and wall, especially if you have small children or pets in the house. Thin wires are usually adequate and are almost invisible.

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Live Christmas Trees

If you are going to use a live Christmas tree, some preparation is needed. First, decide where in your landscape you want to plant the tree after Christmas. Then, dig the hole before the snow flies. Make the hole about twice as big as the tree's estimated root area. Store the soil you removed from the hole in a place where it won't freeze. This is necessary so that the unfrozen soil can be replaced into the hole after planting.

Other things to think about:

- Trees should be kept in the house no more than 10 days - fewer days are even better.
- Move the tree in and out of doors gradually – from outdoors to a garage, then to a cool part of the house, then to a warm room. Reverse this procedure after Christmas.
- Move tree with a handtruck, skateboard, or wagon to avoid injury.
- Do not use flocking or artificial snow.
- Do not use hot lights.
- Keep tree in the coolest part of the room.
- When selecting a tree, container grown is usually a better choice than ball and burlap because the root system is better established.
- Some good choices are Alberta, Norway or Colorado blue spruce; Noble, Grand, White, Alpine or Douglas firs; Scotch, Ponderosa, White, or Austrian pines.

Holly

Select holly with unblemished leaves and bright berries, whether you're cutting it yourself or purchasing it. Spray holly with cold water to remove any dust. Next, to delay natural defoliation, treat holly with a hormone solution such as Wilt Pruf or Holly Dip, available at garden centers and Christmas shops. For extra gloss, add two or three tablespoons of high-grade summer oil spray per gallon of hormone mix.

If holly will be displayed in containers, immerse the stems in water. Keep holly in a cool spot away from drafts.