

Use and Care of Live Christmas Trees

While Christmas trees are a central feature of the Christmas season, a new aspect of their use is beginning to emerge at Christmas, that being the use of a **live** (with roots attached) Christmas tree. This concept is attractive to many people since the Christmas tree can be planted following the holiday season and permitted to develop into an attractive ornamental, adding the beauty and memories to your landscape. However, for this to occur, there are some guidelines that should be followed to insure success.

General considerations;

- Select a tree species that will not only be a good Christmas tree but will also develop into an attractive tree in your yard. Blue spruce, white spruce and Eastern white pine are good choices.
- Most potted trees must be smaller in size, usually between two and four feet in height. Trees larger than this will be difficult to handle due to the tree and its large volume of soil.
- The pot is a temporary container and should be removed prior to planting.
- Carefully consider where the tree will be planted and the ultimate size it will attain.

Care

- Plan on keeping the tree indoors for no more than 7 days.
- While the tree is indoors treat it like a houseplant, making sure to water it regularly.
- Place it in a cooler area away from heat sources, such as fireplaces or furnace outlets. This will keep the plant from drying out.
- Slowly climatize the plant to its new environment. When moving the tree indoors or out, place it in an area like an unheated garage or shed for 1 to 2 days to slowly allow it to adjust to the change in temperature.

Planting Your Christmas Tree

Plan ahead and dig the hole before the ground freezes and store the removed soil in a location where it will not freeze. Cover the hole, or fill it with mulch and adequately mark it for safety and relocation purposes. Following Christmas (and after you climatize the tree to the outside

temperature), place the tree in the hole and fill around the root ball with the unfrozen soil. Water the tree following planting to prevent the roots and tree from freeze-drying. Cover the soil with a mulch material like straw, wood chips or bark. Wrap the tree with burlap to reduce winter damage. In the spring (around April 1), unwrap the tree and water. Note: if a hole could not be dug before the ground froze, the tree should be kept in an unheated garage or shed for the remainder of the winter. Keeping the tree away from any light or heat source. Make sure the soil around the roots is kept moist to prevent freeze-drying. Protect the tree from rodents or mice that might chew on the bark of the tree. Plant the tree in the spring as described above.

You may want to start the tradition of using a living Christmas tree. If these procedures are followed it is possible for your Christmas tree to add beauty to the Christmas celebration and to your landscape for many years to come.