

Christmas Tree Growers

Christmas Tree Care Recommendations for Consumers

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Don't buy a tree that is losing green needles, or has dry, brittle twigs or a sour, musty smell. Excessive needle loss can be detected by vigorously shaking the tree, or dropping it onto the end of the trunk several times from a height of about 1 foot. The loss of old dead needles from the inside of the tree does not indicate that there is a problem with the tree. Mechanical shakers can remove these needles, and reduce the potential for a mess inside the home.

1. Do not buy a tree that is too large for the area where it will be displayed. Aside from paying more than necessary, up to \$10 per foot of height, you will have to cut off a large section of the lower trunk, and possibly the lower whorl of branches. This might ruin the appearance of the lower part of the tree.
2. Note the location of large branches at the bottom of the tree. Be sure that the handle is long enough to allow display of the tree without cutting off the lower whorl of large branches. USDA grading rules specify trees should have a handle 1 to 12 inches long per foot of height. However, some species are routinely sold without pruned handles, eg, Fraser fir.
3. When purchasing a tree from a choose-n-cut farm, have the producer mechanically shake the tree, if possible. This will eliminate dead, loose needles, so, there is less potential mess to reach the home.
4. If the transport time from the retail lot or farm to the final destination is more than 15 minutes, it is best to wrap the tree in a tarp, or carry it in an enclosed camper or the back of a pick-up. Strong wind of 60 mph on the highway, especially during warm weather, can damage a tree in a short time.
5. Do not leave a cut Christmas tree lying in the sun for long periods of time, especially if air temperatures are warm. Fresh trees dry rapidly in those circumstances.
6. If a tree cannot be immediately displayed in water, make a fresh cut at the base of the trunk, and stand it in a bucket of water in a cool, shaded location, either indoors or outdoors. When the tree is displayed in a water holding stand, a second fresh cut is probably unnecessary, but might enhance water uptake.
7. 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 most efficient in taking up water and should not be

removed.

8. Do not use hot water in the stand; it is of no benefit.
9. Do not use chemicals in the stand to prevent evaporation. Water moves into the trunk at the lower cut end, and eventually evaporates (transpires) from the foliage. Evaporation from the surface of water in the stand is negligible, compared to the loss from transpiration.
10. Cut off a disk of wood about 0.5 to 1 inch thick from the base of the trunk immediately before putting the tree in the stand. Make the cut perpendicular to the stem axis. Do not cut at an angle, or into a v-shape, which makes it far more difficult to hold the tree plumb in the stand, and reduces the amount of water available to the tree. Do not cut off too much trunk, resulting in a handle too short for the stand.
11. Do not use additives in water, including floral preservatives, molasses, sugar, bleach, soft drinks, aspirin, honey, or other concoctions. Clean water is the only requirement to maintain freshness.
12. Keep displayed trees away from point sources of heat (fireplaces, heaters, heat vents, direct sunlight). Lowering the room temperature will slow drying, resulting in less water consumption.
13. Use a stand with an adequate water holding capacity for the tree. Using stands that are too small is a very common mistake. Fresh trees use about 1 quart of water per day per inch of trunk diameter. The stand should hold enough water to last 24 hours. If the stand does dry and is subsequently refilled, water uptake may stop or be severely limited, leading to premature drying.
14. Use only UL approved lights and electrical cords and devices on trees. Check electrical cords and light for damage prior to placement on the tree.
15. Disconnect all electrical devices prior to removing them from the tree.
16. Monitor the tree for dryness. If the tree is dry, remove it from the house.
17. Never burn a tree in a fire place or wood stove