

NEWS COLUMN

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Christmas Tree Care

Though Christmas decorations have been going up since November 1, Thanksgiving truly gives way to the true Christmas season.

Following are a few tips and considerations when choosing and caring for one of the most traditional Christmas decorations, your Christmas tree.

Ideally, you want to select a tree that has not dried out. There should be flexibility in the needles and branches. A dry tree even if set in water often will not absorb water.

Once you select a tree, take it home and make a fresh cut before placing it in water. Do this whether you place the tree in the house immediately or leave it in the garage. Remember you are dealing with a living plant and therefore it needs water. The fresh cut helps remove the sap that has developed on the previous cut. The sap, if not removed, acts as a barrier reducing water absorption of the Christmas tree. Keeping the fresh cut under water helps slow down the sap forming process, thus allowing your tree to absorb the greatest amount of water possible. This should be done again (fresh cut) if you buy a tree and let it set in water for one or two weeks in the garage before you move it inside the house. The best fire prevention concerning a Christmas tree is a fresh tree.

The more foliage (long needles vs. short) the more moisture it will tend to lose. It's not uncommon to use two or three gallons of water in two weeks.

Once inside the home, keep water in the stand and if possible do not set it near or on top of heat ducts. This will tend to dry the tree out more quickly.

Adding chemicals or sugar to the water really will not do much. Plenty of good fresh water is best. Spend your money on another Christmas present vs. tree stand additives. You want to maintain the freshness of the tree, not encourage it to grow or produce food.

As far as applying any chemicals that may be a benefit, an anti-transparent can be applied to the tree to help reduce the transpiration rate.

Many times trees that have been tinted or dyed have an anti-transparent mixed in the dye mixture.

Flocking adds a different appearance to the tree but really has very little to do with the water retention of the tree. The proper flocking material can help reduce the fire hazard of the tree if the material is fire retardant.

The ranking of best to worst for trees holding their needles and condition would be pine, fir, and spruce.