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Care of Live Christmas Trees

by James A. Fizzell, Sr. Ext. Adviser
 Horticulture

The trend in recent years is that more and more homeowners like to have a live Christmas tree, a growing tree with roots.

It is recommended that you take these steps in order to get the best results and pleasure from your live tree.

First, dig the hole where you anticipate planting the tree, preferably before the ground is frozen. Mulch the hole to prevent freezing too far down. Keep the soil from the hole where it will not freeze, and can be used when you plant your live tree.

Buy your tree from a local nurseryman or supplier. Plan to keep the tree indoors for as short a time as possible. Make the change in temperature by a series of graduations ... perhaps one day in the garage, one day in a cool basement and then into the room where you plan to set it up and decorate it. Repeat this same process in reverse when you take it outdoors.

It is usually better if the suppliers pots the tree for you. A balled and burlapped evergreen tree should be placed in a porous pot, but keep the pot small so it will be inconspicuous. Try the use of a plastic antidesiccant spray on the foliage before bringing the tree into the house.

Water the tree as you would a house plant. Water frequently and thoroughly. Never let the soil get either dried out or muddy.

Keep temperatures as cool as possible, especially at night. Be sure the tree does not receive direct sunlight, even through a window. Never place the tree near a fireplace or against an operating radiator or other source of heat.

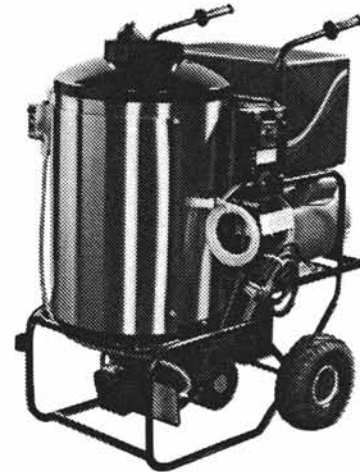
As soon as possible, plant the tree outdoors in the hole you prepared. Use unfrozen soil in order to be sure it is firm around the roots of the tree. Be sure to mulch well.

Soak the soil thoroughly after planting to settle it around the soil ball, and every month or so if the temperature remains mild and there is no rain. Watering will be necessary during droughty periods next summer, too.

It is fun to have a live Christmas tree especially if this year marks a special event such as a wedding, a birth of a new family member, or arrival of a new grandchild. Use the tree indoors at Christmas and then use it outdoors as an evergreen in your foundation planting or as a specimen tree where it will remind you of the Joy of Christmas 1988.

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