



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

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Caring for your Living Christmas Tree

Water your tree thoroughly before bringing it into your home. Place a saucer under the tree to protect the floor or table.

Check the rootball weekly for moisture by inserting a small screwdriver into the rootball about 3 inches from the trunk. The screwdriver should slide easily into the soil when there is adequate moisture. Should you find that the screwdriver doesn't slide in easily, the tree needs to be watered. A plastic bottle with a small hole in it placed close to the trunk will allow the water to slowly absorb into the tree's soil. The tree may use a quart of water a day in a warm home over 72°.

Decorate the tree carefully and use "Cool Lights" or "Twinkle Lights". Keep the tree in the house no longer than 10-14 days. Keep it away from working wood stoves and fireplaces.

Place the tree outside after Christmas, unless the nighttime temperature is below 15°. Then place the tree in your garage until the temperatures meet or exceed 40°. Try to plant as soon as possible since it will be better for the tree and easier to keep it watered. If you cannot plant it, then place the tree on the East or North side of your home until it is planted. Water your tree every 2-3 weeks.

Planting the Living Christmas Tree

Dig the hole before Christmas, if you can. Keep the soil in the garage so it stays manageable. The hole should be twice as wide and slightly deeper than the pot so that the roots have some room to grow. Remove the tree from the pot. If the tree is balled and burlapped (B&B) leave the burlap on and remove strings around the trunk; this will ensure that the tree will not be girdled.

Mix one part compost with two parts soil and fill the hole part way up so that the top of the rootball will be 2-3 inches below ground level. Place the tree in the hole. Backfill with remaining soil mix, and then water immediately and thoroughly. Adding root stimulator will help reduce shock, then water again. Leave a small-size well around the rootball so that the water will soak the root area. Watering will need to be done every 2-4 weeks in January and February and weekly in March, if temperatures are warm and dry.

The tree will need some food starting in March. You may use a slow release fertilizer for convenience, or you may start using a water-based acid type for more growth and color. Apply the water-based fertilizer every 2 weeks through June.