

## **Safety Tips for Enjoying Your Christmas Tree**

We all enjoy the pleasant fragrance and genuine beauty of a live Christmas tree. The following tips can help you get the maximum enjoyment from your live Christmas tree.

### **Choosing a Precut Tree**

Grasp a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull toward you. Very few needles will come off if the tree is fresh. Next, take a few needles and bend them. If they spring back, the tree is fresh. Now, bump the trunk of the tree on the ground. If green needles fall off the tree, it is not fresh. You can expect a few brown needles to fall from the tree. Choose another tree if many brown needles fall off.

The length of time a tree has been cut affects tree freshness. Trees that have dropped to below a 75 percent foliar moisture content will continue to dry out even when placed in water. Select trees that have been cut for a short period of time.

### **Choosing a Field-Grown Tree**

Trees still connected to their roots will be fresh and full of water. Select a tree that will fit your stand. Then gently shake the tree to see if any green needles fall. After that, break a few needles and check for fragrance.

Pines and Leyland cypress will stay fresh longer than other trees. Cedars and cultivars of Arizona cypress stay fresh for a shorter period of time.

### **Before Bringing the Tree Inside**

If your tree has been cut for more than one hour, recut at least one inch from the trunk and place the tree in plain water immediately. If you are not going to take the tree inside until later, store the tree out of the wind and sun in an unheated sheltered area such

as a garage or porch. Do not expose the tree to freezing temperatures at any time. Make certain the container has sufficient capacity to keep the trunk in water all the time. A fresh tree may use more than a gallon of water a day.

Because your tree is a natural product, you can expect to find some dead needles, small limbs and grasses in the tree. Clean the dead materials from the tree before you bring it inside. This step may not be necessary if you purchase the tree from someone who shakes the tree when you buy it.

If the tree is stored outside in water for several days, recut a half inch from the stem just before you take it inside.

### **Once Your Tree is Inside**

Once your tree is inside, you can care for it by placing it in a stable container that will hold at least 1, and preferably 2, gallons of water. Keep the trunk base covered with water. Check the water level each day. Keep the tree away from heat sources such as hot air ducts, radiators, fireplaces and television sets. Remember, heat will dry your tree out. Follow these additional fire safety tips:

- Use only UL-approved lighting accessories.
- Avoid combustible decorations.
- Keep metal foil and tinsel away from electrical sockets.
- Always turn off your decorations before going to bed or leaving home.
- Make sure your smoke detector is in good working order.
- Make sure your fire extinguisher is in good working order.
- Never place candles or other open flame sources on or near your tree.

- Test your light cords before you put them on your tree. They should be in good working order and in good condition.

### **After the Christmas Season**

After the Christmas season, check your decorations and dispose of any electrical items that are showing wear. Pack your decorations carefully and store them in a cool dry place. Storing decorations in a hot attic may cause electrical components to develop problems.

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