



BEST PRACTICES FOR CHRISTMAS TREE CARE



Christmas tree care recommendations for consumers :

It's important to buy a fresh tree to limit needle drop. Here are the signs to look for :

- Branches are flexible and do not break easily.
- If you pull gently on the green needles, they stay in place.
- The tree smells pleasant.
- When you lift the tree about 30 cm off the ground and let it fall upright, only a small amount of needles will fall off.

CAUTION: The loss of dead needles inside the tree does not indicate a problem. Mechanical shakers can remove these needles and reduce the risk of making a mess inside the house.

1. Buy a tree of the right height for the location where it will be exposed. Otherwise, you'll pay more than you need to, up to \$10 per foot (30 cm) of height. In which case, you may have to cut off some of the lower trunk and perhaps some of the lower branches. This may spoil the appearance of the lower part of the tree.
2. If you buy your tree from the farm, ask the grower to shake it mechanically, if possible. This will remove dead and loose needles.
3. While you're waiting to bring your tree into the house, leave it in the shade and out of the wind to prevent it from drying out, especially if the temperature is high.
4. Ideally, the tree should be placed in water within two hours of cutting. As this is rarely possible, place it quickly in a bucket of water in cool shade, indoors or outdoors.
5. Before installing your tree, cut a disk of wood 0.5 to 1 inch (1.25 to 2.5 cm) thick at the base of the trunk. The cut must be made perpendicular to the axis of the trunk to ensure that the tree remains plumb in its support. Make sure the base of the trunk is clean to ensure water absorption, otherwise repeat the cut.
6. Use a support adapted to the diameter of your tree's trunk that holds a quantity of water suitable for the tree. It should hold enough water to last 24 hours. Fresh trees consume about 1 L of water per day for every 2.5 cm of trunk diameter. If the medium dries out and is then refilled, water uptake may be limited, leading to premature drying out.
7. Drilling a hole at the base of the trunk does not affect water absorption.
8. Hot water is not necessary.
9. Place your tree away from heat sources - chimneys, heaters, heat registers, direct sunlight. Lowering the ambient temperature will reduce water consumption and slow down drying.
10. As the weeks go by, check the condition of your tree. If the tree is dry, remove it from the house. The lifespan of a tree in the house varies from 2 to 6 weeks, depending on the species.
11. Use only UL-approved lights, cords and devices on trees. Check electrical cords and lights for damage before placing them on the tree.
12. Never burn a tree in a fireplace or wood-burning stove.

It's normal for a fresh tree to lose needles.

Christmas tree handling recommendation for growers and retailers :

Cut Christmas trees can deteriorate under the effects of heat, wind, sunlight and extreme temperature changes. That's why every grower and retailer should strive to reduce their exposure to these elements. Below is a series of recommendations which, if followed, should ensure that consumers get the freshest fir possible.

Growers

1. In warm climates, harvest trees as late in the season as possible to allow them to harden to the cold, which will improve their post-harvest preservation.
2. Harvesting above 12o C increases the risk of rapid tree desiccation and premature needle drop;
3. Pack trees as soon as possible after cutting, especially if the weather is sunny and warm. Drying can be very rapid in these conditions.
4. Spread a layer of wood shavings on the ground where the trees will be stored; moisten this area regularly.
5. Ideally, store trees vertically rather than lying down, in shady, wind-free areas.
6. Horizontal stacking can lead to increased mold problems and foliage damage. Limit the height of storage piles : this will reduce tree compaction and the risk of quality loss.
7. Sell trees on a first-in, first-out basis.
8. Avoid stacking trees on hot parking lots or against brick or concrete walls exposed to the sun.
9. The best storage conditions are low temperatures, maximum 10°C, high relative humidity, 85-95 %, and shade.
10. Use refrigerated trucks where possible, especially for shipments over 650 km or for transporting trees in hot regions. For long-distance shipments and storage in refrigerated trucks and containers, trees must be loaded to allow air circulation on top, bottom and sides, and refrigeration systems. Refrigeration systems should operate on wet cycles to avoid dehydrating the trees.
11. Never leave containers, closed trailers or platforms in the sun for long periods, as this quickly leads to overheating.

Retailers

1. In marketing areas, trees should be stored in the shade and out of the wind. Ideally, the base of the trunks should be in water, if possible. Make a 2nd base cut less than 2 hours after harvesting.
2. Trees should be stored upright or in small stacks in a cool, shaded area, away from traffic to avoid soiling. If there is no shade, use a tarpaulin or shade cloth installed over the trees and on the sides, leaving a space of at least 61 cm for ventilation.
3. Avoid walking on wrapped trees, as this breaks branches and crushes foliage.
4. Be especially careful when handling frozen trees; they are very fragile.
5. Trees exposed to heat in retail settings can be misted or sprayed with water overnight to replace moisture lost during the day. Fogging trees on the surface of storage stacks can also be beneficial, but soaking trees can lead to mold and spoilage problems.
6. Shaking the trees with a "shaker" will help remove some insects and dead needles.
7. Advise customers of good tree care practices.

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