

Keep your Cut Tree Fresh



A freshly cut, green Christmas tree is a beautiful sight and adds a wonderful fragrance to your home. But it is also a potential fire hazard if not properly cared for. The importance of keeping the tree as fresh as possible while it is in the home can't be overemphasized.

To keep your cut Christmas tree green and safe, follow these hints:

Supply plenty of water. If the tree is to be stored for some time before being moved indoors, stand the tree trunk in a container filled with water. If the tree is to be displayed immediately, set the trunk in a tree stand that is designed to hold water.

Saw 1/4- to 1/2-inch off the bottom of the tree trunk before placing the tree in the stand, this allows the tree to take up water. Keep your tree stand filled for as long as the tree remains in the home. Check it daily, especially the first few days after it is cut. Well-watered trees should remain fresh for three or four weeks.

Do NOT add bleach to your Christmas tree water. Unfortunately, the recommendation to use bleach is potentially dangerous. Bleach can quickly kill cut trees. The dead trees then become fire hazards.

Select your tree according to how long you have it up in the house. Some types of trees will dry out faster or drop needles sooner than other species. Pines and spruces will remain fresh for a shorter period of time; Douglas fir and grand fir will be intermediate in their ability to remain fresh. Noble fir last the longest of any tree species.

Locate the tree away from heat sources and away from doors in the home. In the event of a fire, the tree could block escape from the room. Keep the Christmas tree room cool. The cooler the room temperature, the longer the tree will stay fresh in the house. Turn your tree lights off when not around the tree. Do not burn candles on or near the tree. Avoid overloading electrical cords. Make sure your home's smoke detector is working properly and keep a portable fire extinguisher handy just in case.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.