



# Christmas Tree Care

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There are many "tips" to caring for a Christmas tree that propose to make it last longer or stay greener. In truth, all a tree really needs to maintain freshness is adequate water. This is easily done by using the proper tree stand and keeping the water level in the stand above the base of the tree. The following tips will help to maintain the freshness and aroma of a live Christmas tree this holiday season:

- Use a tree stand that holds enough water for the size of the tree. The rule of thumb is one quart of water per one inch of stem diameter. A stand that holds one gallon of water is standard for most trees. The tree will absorb a surprising amount of water, particularly during the first week, so check the water level daily, refilling as necessary to keep the trunk submerged.
- Make sure the stand is the proper size for the tree. Do not "adjust" the size of the tree trunk to fit the stand. The outer layers of wood are the most efficient in taking up water and should not be removed.
- Before setting the tree in the stand, remove with a perpendicular cut, 1/2-1 inch off the bottom of the trunk. This allows the tree to take up water more freely as you will remove any tissue that has begun to callus over. Don't cut the trunk at an angle or into a V-shape, the cut should be flat, which allows the tree to sit in the stand more easily and provides more surface area for water uptake. Drilling a hole in the base of the trunk does not improve water uptake.
- Fill the tree stand reservoir with plain tap water. Additives such as aspirin, carbonated beverages, honey, sugar, bleach, water holding gels and floral preservatives are of no benefit and only dirty the water.
- Be fire safe and always inspect lights before hanging them on a tree and take care not to overload electrical outlets. Likewise, keep displayed trees away from heat sources like space heaters, fireplaces, stoves, heat vents, etc. Monitor a tree for dryness. Run your fingers across the needles to determine if they are dry and brittle. If most needles break easily or fall off, the tree is too dry and should be removed from the home.
- Flame retardants and anti-transpirant sprays have little effect on cut, indoor trees. However, lowering the room temperature will slow the drying process, resulting in less water consumption each day.
- It is advisable to recycle a tree rather than to use it in your wood stove or fireplace. Check with your local County or Reservation Extension agent to find Christmas tree recycling locations.



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## References

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