



## Live Potted Christmas Trees

Great interest has developed in using a live potted tree rather than a cut tree for Christmas. The tree can then be planted in your yard or donated to the community. You can purchase a live tree for about what a good grade cut one costs, but it will usually be smaller because of weight and pot size.

There are some things you need to know and do if you're going to have success with a living tree.

You need to decorate the tree later in the season and take it down a bit earlier than you may be accustomed to.

A live tree should not be kept indoors for more than 14 days or it will start to grow. If a growing tree is moved back out into the severe winter cold, it can be killed. Always keep the tree away from heat sources.

The following are some options:

-To plant in your own yard after Christmas, locate and dig the hole before the ground freezes deeply. Cover soil and mulch so the soil can be worked easier at the time of planting. Water in well after planting.

-If holding the tree until spring, keep the tree in the garage or other protected area outdoors and mulch heavily around the pot. This will protect the root ball from freeze-thaw cycles.

-Some people choose to leave the tree in the house or other heated area for the winter. New soft growth will develop; then caution must be taken not to take outside too early in the spring (usually wait until 1<sup>st</sup> of May). The tree should be hardened off by gradually exposing it to the sun and wind.

Remember all living trees require water both in the pot and when planted outside. A neat idea for watering potted trees inside for a short time period is to place 10 to 12 ice cubes on the soil each day. This helps keep the root ball cold and maintain dormancy. For trees placed outside you can rely on the winter snows and rains to do your watering. If it's a dry winter, you may need to water with a bucket of water a few times.

In our experience we've found Colorado Spruce to be the best evergreen tree for this practice.

Following these guidelines will assure you of the best success in having a live and viable tree for years to come. Many of our customers have had several years of exciting results. Because of conditions beyond our control, we cannot guarantee Live Christmas Trees but welcome calls if you have any questions about the care of your tree. We are here year-round to help with all your gardening needs.

***Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from your friends at Sunnyside Gardens!***

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