

2018 Virginia Grown Christmas Tree Month - Social Media Messages

CARE FOR LIVING TREES

In many parts of the country, people celebrate Christmas with a living tree. The roots are kept in a “ball” of earth. The ball can be wrapped in burlap or set into a biodegradable container or pot. The tree may be added to the landscape after the holidays. Thoroughly inspect the tree for any unwanted pests such as invasive insects before purchasing the tree.

To use a living Christmas tree successfully, please observe the following points:

- The adaptability of the species should be considered. Many species are shipped outside of their natural area and may not be adaptable to other areas.
- Check with a reliable nursery or extension forester.
- The tree should be stored in an unheated, sheltered area such as a garage or porch, out of the wind and sun. Do not expose the tree to freezing temperatures at any time.
- The tree will need adequate water. The root ball or soil should be kept slightly damp but not flooded. Wrap the root ball of a balled tree in plastic or place in a tub while it is in the house.
- Live trees may be decorated, but with care. If lights are used, they must not give off any heat.
- Do not remove the tree directly from a warm house out into freezing temperatures. Instead, move to a sheltered area first for several days.
- If the ground is unfrozen, the tree may be replanted. The spot to be dug may be mulched to prevent freezing. Plant as soon as possible.
- Do not remove the burlap and strapping (unless it is plastic). This keeps the root ball solid and secure. In the instance of a plastic cover, cut the cord and roll down the plastic at least half way prior to planting.
- Tap the tree container of a potted tree and remove prior to planting. Do not attempt to remove soil from the root system. Earth removed from the original hole should be backfilled around the root ball. Mulch heavily over the top of the planted root ball to prevent it from freezing. Water only as needed: a flooded tree may not survive.

- Stake the trees to prevent wind tipping or damage during the first growing season.