

How to care for your Christmas tree, centerpiece of your holiday celebration

One of the most joyous expressions of the Christmas spirit is the traditional tree, decorated with shimmering ornaments, many of which have been handed down from generation to generation, and lit with bright lights in every color of the rainbow.

Depending on whether yours is a living or cut tree, the necessary care varies. Below are tips for prolonging the life and beauty of each.

Cut Christmas tree care

Remember, a Christmas tree is a living thing. Care for it as carefully as you would a cut flower. Once you select a Christmas tree, follow these suggestions to keep it fresh and safe.

1. If you buy your tree several days before it will be set up and decorated, store the tree outdoors or on a cool porch or patio until you are ready to decorate.

An area that provides protection from the wind or sun will help the tree retain its moisture.

2. If you plan to store the tree several days, make a straight across cut on the butt of the tree about an inch from the end.

This opens the tree stem so it can take up water. Store the tree upright and place the butt end in a container of water.

3. When you bring the tree into the house for decorating, make another fresh, straight across cut in the trunk about an inch from the original cut. Use a tree stand that holds water.

4. Trees are thirsty. They may drink between two pints and a gallon of water per day, so make sure to check daily and supply fresh water as needed.

A stand which holds at least a gallon of water is recommended. If you allow the water level to drop below the trunk, a seal will form just as it does on a cut flower, and a new cut will be necessary.

5. Place the tree away from

fireplaces, radiators, TV sets and other heat sources. Turn off the tree lights when you leave your home and before you retire at night.

6. Avoid use of combustible decorations. Check all electric lights and connections. Do not use lights with warm or frayed cords and never use lighted candles.

Following these care and precaution measures should ensure an attractive tree that stays fresh indoors for several weeks.

Living Christmas tree care

In many parts of the country, people celebrate Christmas with a balled and burlap tree which may be added to the landscape after the holiday. To use a potted Christmas tree successfully, however, you should observe the following points:

1. 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 nurseryman or extension forester.

2. 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 root ball to freezing temperatures at any time.

3. The tree should be moved into the house no ear-

lier than a day or two before Christmas. A week to 10 days in the house in long enough for live trees.

4. The tree should receive adequate water. The root ball should be kept damp but not flooded. Wrap the root ball in plastic or place in a tub while it is in the house.

5. The tree may be decorated, but with care. If lights are used, they must not give off any heat.

6. Do not remove the tree from a warm house out into freezing temperatures. Instead, move to a sheltered area first.

7. If the ground is unfro-

zen, the tree may be replanted. The spot to be dug may be mulched to prevent freezing. Plant as soon as possible.

8. Do not remove the burlap and strapping. This keeps the root ball solid and secure. Earth removed from the original hole should be back-filled 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 die.

9. Stake the tree to prevent wind tipping or damage during the first growing season.

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Practical gift suggestions

Wondering what to get someone for Christmas? Here are some suggestions from the Automotive Parts & Accessories Association for car-enthusiasts:

- Ice scraper/snow brush
- Small snow shovel
- Safety flares and/or reflective triangles
- Jumper cables
- Wiper blades
- Tire pressure gauge
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- "How-to" books
- Cruise control
- Seat covers
- Enrollment in an adult education auto repair class
- Fender covers
- Tire brush.

Wrapping it up

All of these items, readily available from any store which sells auto equipment, can be stored in a large fishing-tackle box or a sturdy cardboard box.

While none of these gifts are glamour items, they will be well appreciated by any motorist because of their thoughtfulness, said AIC.



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