



# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## “Live” Christmas Tree Selection and Handling



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For many families, a holiday tree tradition is selecting a “live” non-cut evergreen tree. To be successful, the Ohio Chapter International Society of Arboriculture suggests the following tips for selecting and caring for a “live” Christmas tree.

First...Carefully consider where in the landscape you will plant your tree. Traditional Christmas trees including firs, spruce and scotch pine, become very large when mature (40-50 feet tall, 20-40 feet wide). Select an open area where there are no overhanging tree branches, buildings or utility wires. If you don't have such a site, select a dwarf conifer or evergreen shrub.

Second...When visiting a nursery or garden center, you will find a variety of evergreens to choose from. Trees are sold either in containers or wrapped with burlap (commonly referred to as balled and bur lapped – B&B). In addition, you can find nurseries that allow you to dig your own.

Third...Before the ground freezes, dig a hole that is three times wider than the root ball and is no deeper than the tree's root flare (area of swelling on the lower tree trunk). After you dig the hole, fill it with leaves or straw to keep the hole from freezing. Store the soil you remove where it will not freeze.

Fourth...Two weeks prior to Christmas have the tree selected and stored in a cool place like a garage or porch for seven days prior to bringing the tree indoors. Water the root ball to keep it moist to the touch.

The ideal way of handling a live tree is to keep it indoors for as short a period as possible (4-7 days at most). If left inside for too long, it may become acclimated to warmer conditions and be more susceptible to wintry conditions when returning outdoors. Place a plastic bag around the root ball or container to reduce moisture loss and avoid damaging your floor. Keep the tree away from radiators or other heat sources. Room temperatures of 65°F or lower is best. Monitor water to keep the roots from drying out. Be sure to move the tree by its root ball not by its trunk because pulling and lifting the tree by the trunk will cause damage.

After Christmas, take the tree back to the garage or porch for about a week before planting. When you are ready to plant, remove the organic material from the hole, position the tree straight and level. If you have a B&B tree, cut the rope and fold back the burlap from the top of the ball. Fill the area around the root ball with the stored soil, tamping it down as you fill, then water thoroughly and apply a woodchip mulch.

If weather prevents you from planting your tree, keep it in an unheated garage, porch or protected area away from sun and wind. Keep the root ball watered, then plant in the spring. With appropriate care and planting, you will be able to enjoy your tree for years to come.

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**ABOUT OCISA:** The mission of the Ohio Chapter International Society of Arboriculture is to advance responsible tree care practices through research, technology, and education while promoting the benefits of trees. Visit us at: [www.ohiochapterisa.org](http://www.ohiochapterisa.org)

**INTERVIEW A CERTIFIED ARBORIST:** Please contact the Ohio Chapter ISA if you are interested in interviewing a local certified arborist.