

Care Guidelines for Dug Christmas Trees

Before display

- **Store the tree in a cool but sheltered area such as a garage as long as you want, but no less than few days.** Going directly from the winter air to the balmy 70 °F of your house will shock and potentially kill the tree.
- **Do not expose the tree to freezing temperatures at any time.** In particular, avoid placing the tree out of doors on concrete, pavement, or on an elevated surface – the roots will freeze and the tree will die.
- **If the tree is bailed (wrapped up with twine), leave it that way.** It will not harm the tree, and will make it easier to manage later.
- **Consider piling mulch, straw, leaves, or something similar over the spot where you plan to replant the tree.** This should keep the ground from freezing, making your job a lot easier later on.

Bringing your dug tree inside

- **It is best to bring your dug tree inside for only a week,** but at least a day before you plan to decorate it. Being inside for longer periods may deceive the tree into thinking spring has arrived. If this happens, it will probably die when it finds itself replanted in frigid soils.
- **Pick a spot for the tree away from sources of heat,** such as vents, radiators, space heaters, and direct sunlight.
- **Wrap the root ball in plastic** or find some other means of keeping it from spilling dirt on your floors and carpets as you move it.
- **If you have a plastic tub or other container** for the root ball, **go ahead and set it in place inside,** ready to receive the tree.
- **When you are ready to move the tree, a dolly like the UPS man uses with a large flat bottom is one of the best ways.** Without a doubt, this is not a one-man job. Plan for the process to take a while, perhaps an hour. Mayhap have cold beers or hot cider standing by to reward you and your helper(s) periodically during the process. Dug trees are heavy and a rush job could take its toll on your doorframes, stairs, vertebrae, and temper.
- **If the tree is bailed,** once it is in place you can **cut the twine to unfurl its branches** in all their splendor. Be patient, it may be a day before they resume their natural positions and you can decorate it.

Caring for your tree

- **Do not overwater your dug tree.** Give it only enough water to keep the root ball from drying out. Overwatering may once again cause the tree to decide spring has sprung.

- **Decorate with low temperature lights.** LED lights are best, and they will save you bundles of energy. Among incandescents, smaller is better. Although this helps prevent fires, the real justification for low temperature lights is, again, avoiding tricking the tree into thinking spring has arrived.

Replanting your tree

- **Once again, acclimate your tree to the temperature change** to avoid shocking it. Storing it in a cool sheltered spot like a garage for a few days is the best means of accomplishing this.
- **Dig the hole for your tree as soon as possible after it has had a few days to acclimate. The hole should be one and a half times the size of the root ball or container.**
- **Keep the burlap and *biodegradable* rope on the root ball.** Take off any plastic rope. This keeps the root ball secure. Especially do not attempt to remove dirt from the root system.
- **Put the tree in the hole.** Yup. Bet you couldn't have figured that out on your own.
- **Fill in the space around the root ball with earth from the hole.**
- **Water the tree thoroughly.**
- **Pile mulch over the top of the root ball and loose dirt to keep the roots from freezing. Do not pile mulch directly against the trunk of the tree.** Shredded bark, peat moss, and pine needles are all good choices for mulch.
- **Place stakes around the tree and secure it to them radio antenna style to keep it from blowing over in the loose dirt.** Do not tie the wires, ropes, etc. so tightly about the trunk as to cut into the bark. Pieces of an old garden hose threaded over the wire/twine are a good way to distribute the force and keep it from slicing into the bark. You may remove the stakes next fall.