



By: Jacki Hein, CCNP

LIVING CHRISTMAS TREES

With the holidays coming, you may be thinking of a living tree this year and how nice it would be to stay REALLY green. What better way to do that than a living, potted tree that can later be planted into the landscape?!

Nurseries are stocking them now - Colorado Blue Spruce, Austrian Pines, Dwarf Alberta Spruce - there are quite a few varieties available. Talk to your nursery and be sure to get one that's right for where you plan to plant it. A Dwarf Alberta Spruce is a cute little tree, but would never be happy in the hot western sun. Likewise, an Austrian Pine would almost push the house out of the way if planted too close to the foundation!

After bringing your tree home, don't be too fast to place it inside. Potted outdoor trees should not be in the house any more than a week to ten days at most. The idea here is that you don't want it to acclimate to the warmer temperatures inside and begin to grow. Leave it outside, moving it into the garage to transition for a few days before bringing it in.

The best location for a living tree inside is a cooler spot, away from heat ducts or sunny windows. These trees are fine with decorations; lights, however, should be the tiny cooler types. Check the soil often and water when dry.

When your tree is ready to be moved back out, again transition it through the garage for a few days. Rapid changes from warm to freezing cold can do damage to the plant. After its time in the garage, your tree can be planted into the ground outside. With luck, the soil won't be too frozen and you'll be able to work some compost or sphagnum peat into the planting area.

Be sure to water your newly planted tree every few weeks if the weather is dry. Typically, that's how our winters are. Using living trees for Christmas is a bit more work, but offers the advantage of a landscape tree with special meaning as the years go by.