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Caring for a Live Cut Tree Before and After the Holidays - Cut Christmas Tree Care



Can it really be time to start thinking of decorating for Christmas?

Indeed, some cannot wait and the moment the turkey and dressing are in the fridge, out come the Christmas decorations! If your tradition is getting a live tree or it is a new tradition you're starting this year, here are some tips to keep you safe and your tree looking it's best.

If you don't want to cut your own then try to buy early. Most Christmas trees are cut in early November for shipment. North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin are producers of cut Christmas trees in this part of the U.S., that you may find at your local stores. However, you may want to buy more locally and there are a few Christmas tree farms still operating in the area. Do your research. While you may have to drive a bit to get there, you could be supporting local farm family businesses. Some things to consider when looking for a tree -

Freshness - You can determine freshness of an already cut tree in a few simple ways. The needles should be pliable not brittle. Fresh tree branches will also not be brittle. It shouldn't be losing a lot of needles if it's fresh.

Trunk size - Consider the diameter of the trunk. Make sure it will fit in your stand. It is not a good idea to shave the trunk to fit. The outer layer of the trunk just under the bark is where most water uptake happens.

Optimal Care - If you don't intend on setting up your tree right away, place it in a cool, sheltered location like an unheated garage. Sun and wind dry trees out quickly. It should be placed in a bucket of water until it is brought inside and put in the stand.

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Decide ahead of time where your tree will be located in your home. It should be away from heat sources and direct sunlight. To care for a fresh tree once you get home, cut about ¼ inch from the bottom of the trunk and then place the freshly cut trunk into water as soon as possible. These actions will help the tree take up water better. The single most important tip in caring for a fresh cut tree is to make sure it has water daily. The stand should hold at least a gallon of water and never be allowed to dry out. Use plain water. You shouldn't add molasses, sugar, soft drinks, aspirin, or any commercial products. According to Iowa State Extension, they provide no benefits. A well cared for tree should last 3-4 weeks depending on how fresh it was at the time of purchase.



Post-Holiday - After the festivities when you are ready to remove the tree, there are several ways to recycle trees post-holiday. If you live within the city limits of Georgetown, the Georgetown Public Works crew will come by and pick up your tree if you remove all ornaments, tinsel, garland, etc., and bring it out to the curb. If you live anywhere in Scott County (that includes Georgetown, Sadieville, and Stamping Ground) you can bring your tree (of course, all decorations need to be removed including tinsel) to Brooking Park, at the gravel area next to the old road department building. Kentucky Department Fish and Wildlife (KDFW) recycle trees left here to add fish habitat to lakes. Jeff Crosby of KDFW said it was a very popular program and they have collections sites all over Kentucky. You can also check for other drop off locations around the area at the KDFW website -

https://fw.ky.gov/fish/pages/Xmas_Tree_Recycling.aspx ; the website will be up and running after December 15 for the 2024-2025 season. At all locations drop off is during daylight hours only (between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm), and will be open from approximately Dec. 26 through January 15th. Look for the signs.

One last option NOT RECOMMENDED is to burn your Christmas tree in a fireplace or wood stove. Dry evergreen branches still have a lot of sap and can explode. It also can contribute to the build up of creosote and cause a flue fire.

So whether you are in the camp of put the tree up as early as possible or wait till Christmas Eve, these tips should help you have a safe enjoyable holiday season.

By Renee Corrigan, Scott County Master Gardener; edited by Sharon Flynt, Agent for Horticulture, Scott County Cooperative Extension

Resources:

Sandy Feather, Extension Educator, Green Industry, Penn State University Extension Program
Rick Bates, Ph.D., Professor of Horticulture, Penn State University
Vincent Cotrone, Extension Education, Urban Forestry, Penn State University Extension Program
Richard Jauron and Aaron Steil, Iowa State Extension
Jeff Crosby, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, Central Fisheries District
Robert Bruin, Director of Public Works, City of Georgetown Public Works Department



How Poinsettia Diseases Can Ruin the Holiday

Poinsettia are commonly used as holiday decorations in public and personal spaces. No holiday décor is complete without at least one. However, numerous plant diseases can act as a Grinch to steal holiday cheer. Proper plant selection and maintenance are important for disease-free poinsettias that will last well into the New Year.



Figure 1: Leaf spot symptoms caused by scab. (Photo: John Hartman, UK)

Poinsettia Selection

Inspect all plant parts prior to purchase. Development of disease symptoms may occur over long periods of time. Early symptoms are easy to overlook, as they are often small and underdeveloped.

Assess bracts (colorful, flower-like structures) and leaves for spots and damage. These spots can be the start of diseases like scab and Botrytis blight. Both of these diseases can cause tan to gray-brown spots on bracts and leaves (Figure 1) and ultimately result in plant dieback and defoliation.

Stems can also become infected by disease-causing pathogens. Bacterial diseases (bacterial soft rot and bacterial canker), as well as fungal diseases (Botrytis blight, scab and Rhizoctonia root and stem rot) can damage stems. Lesions often develop on stems near the soil line (Figure 2). Since stem infections limit plants' ability to move nutrients and water, symptoms such as wilting, dieback, and defoliation may be observed.



Figure 2: Stem lesion caused by bacterial stem canker disease. (Photo: Cheryl Kaiser, UK)

If plants can be removed from the pot, inspect roots for damage and decay. Pythium root rot, black root rot, and Rhizoctonia root and stem rot can all impact roots. They result in black or gray, fragile roots that can become mushy (Figure 3). When roots are damaged, upper plant parts cannot be supported, resulting in wilting and dieback.



Figure 3: Pythium root rot of poinsettia. Wilt symptoms (left) and close up of discolored roots with root rot from same plant (right). (Photo Mike Benson, North Carolina State University)

Plant Maintenance & Disease Management

- Maintain plant health and vigor with proper nutrition, light, and watering practices.
- Remove plants from decorative pot covers. These may hold water.
- Drain saucers immediately after watering. Do not allow plants to sit in water. Overly wet soils can lead to root rot disease.
- Remove and destroy any leaves or plant parts that are dead, discolored, or deteriorating.
- Avoid crowding. Space plants to increase air circulation.
- Dispose of any plants that show disease symptoms.
- Once plants become infected, management options are limited.
- Root and stem rots cannot be treated or cured.
- Leaf spots and blossom symptoms can be managed by removing infected plant parts and maintaining plant health. The life the plant can often be extended through the holiday season.
- If disease is severe, the plant should be discarded, especially in situations where additional plants are at risk for infection.

By Kim Leonberger, Plant Pathology Extension Associate, and Nicole Gauthier, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist, UK

Wreath Making



A Few Spaces Still Available

Limit One Class
Sign up per individual
Class size is limited, please call 502 863 0984 to register. Make to supply your phone number when you register. This will inable us to contact you quickly if the need arises.

Daytime Classes

Dec. 7	Saturday	9:00 am
Dec 10	Tuesday	10:00 am
Dec. 11	Wednesday	1:00 pm

Evening Classes

Dec. 3	Tuesday	5:30 pm
Dec. 12	Thursday	5:30 pm
Dec. 17	Tuesday	5:30 pm

The Beet Goes On ...

from the Fall Garden to Holiday Treat

Beets can be planted up to six weeks before the first killing frost in the fall, and they can be harvested in time for the holidays. Beets harvested in the fall are often more colorful and have higher sugar levels than spring-planted beets



Kentucky Red Velvet Muffins

1 1/4 cups whole-wheat flour
1/3 cup cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sugar
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

Zest of one orange
Juice of one orange (about 4 tablespoons)
2 large eggs, at room temperature
1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce

1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup finely chopped cooked beets (see back of card for cooking instructions)
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. **Line** 12 muffin cups with paper liners. **Mix** flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt together in a medium bowl. In a separate large bowl, **beat** sugar, butter, and orange zest until smooth. **Add** orange juice, eggs, applesauce, and vanilla to the sugar mixture; **beat** until smooth. **Stir** about one-third of the flour mixture into the sugar mixture to fully incorporate it into a batter; **repeat** with remaining flour mixture in two even additions. **Fold in** beets and chocolate chips. **Divide** batter

equally into the lined muffin cups using a 1/4-cup measuring scoop. **Bake** about 25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. **Cool** in pan for 10 minutes before **removing** muffins to cool completely on a wire rack.

Yield: 12 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Nutrition analysis: 170 calories, 7g total fat, 4g saturated fat, 40mg cholesterol, 190mg sodium, 26g total carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 15g total sugars, 12g added sugars, 4g protein, 0% DV vitamin D, 2% DV calcium, 6% DV iron, 4% DV potassium.

Kentucky Beets

SEASON: June through November

NUTRITION FACTS: Beets are good sources of fiber, folate, calcium, and vitamin C, and they are low in fat. One cup of cooked beets or one medium raw beet contains about 50 calories and 2 grams fiber.

SELECTION: When selecting beets, choose those that are round, firm, rich in color, and smooth over most of the surface. Wilted or decayed tops may indicate a lack of freshness. Two bunches, or 6 to 8 individual beets, weigh approximately 2 pounds.

STORAGE: The roots of the beets can be stored in plastic bags for 1 to 2 weeks in the refrigerator. You can also refrigerate the greens in plastic bags and use them within 2 to 3

days. Cooked beets may be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week.

PREPARATION: Rinse beets under running water, removing any visible traces of dirt. To keep the juices of the beets locked inside while cooking, leave the skin, tail, and an inch of the stem attached. The skin will be easier to remove after the beet is cooked.

- **To bake:** Scrub unpeeled beets, and place in a baking pan with 1/4 inch of water and cover. Bake at 375 degrees F for about 40 minutes for a large beet.
- **To steam:** Scrub unpeeled beets, and place in a steaming basket. Cover and steam for about 35 to 40 minutes for large beets, 20 to 25 minutes for smaller beets, or until tender.

Kentucky Proud Project

County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences University of Kentucky, Dietetics and Human Nutrition students

Source: FruitsAndVeggies.org

July 2021

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand. PlateltUp.ca.uky.edu



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University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Mark Your Calendar

2025 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference

The 2025 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference is Monday and Tuesday January 6-7, 2025 with pre-conference events on Sunday, Jan. 5 at the Marriott Lexington Griffin Gate Golf Resort & Spa in Lexington, KY.

This premier, state-wide event annually brings together approximately 600 growers, researchers, and technical support providers. The conference is devoted to fruit, vegetable, and cut flower production, handling, harvesting, marketing, storage, and related topics.

The conference kicks-off with pre-conference events including a Farm Food Safety Plan Workshop, the Bringing the Farm to School Grower Training, and a Farmers Market Short Course. The main conference program has more than 20 different educational tracks with more than 70 speakers. The trade show offers more than 60 vendors featuring horticulture products and services.

Registration

Registration allows entrance to all conference sessions and includes free lunch on both days! The online and mail-in early bird registration price of \$80 per attendee ends on Friday, December 20, 2024. After that, the price of online and on-site registration will be

\$100 per attendee. So don't wait! [Follow this link to register online!](#)

For mail-in registration and conference details including the conference program, visit the [meeting webpage](#).

And don't forget to book your hotel room at the special group rate! A single or double guest room rate is only \$119.00 per night and includes two breakfast vouchers per room per night.

Beginning Farmer Scholarships Available!

[Conference registration scholarships](#) are being offered to help Beginning Farmers attend this conference for the first time. These scholarships are available on a first come first served basis. Preference will be given to commercial farmers with less than 10 years of farming experience and to those who have participated in beginning farmer workshops and classes. The scholarship does not cover hotel accommodation.

For more information about the conference, any of the pre-conference workshops, registration, or scholarships, email dakota@kyhortcouncil.org.

Use January for Preventive Maintenance on Your Sprayers

By Ric Bessin, Entomology Extension Specialist

Once winter begins to wind down, growers need to get their equipment ready for the coming growing season. When it is time to begin spraying and planting, you don't want to spend precious time fixing and repairing equipment. It is during this down time when you should do some routine maintenance on sprayers. Spray equipment in poor repair can lead to poor application, which will cost money.

Look for Leaks

Before you start, put on a pair of gloves to protect yourself from pesticide residues. Begin by filling your sprayer with clean water, but before you engage the pump, look for leaks from around the pump, hoses, strainers, and nozzles. Pay particular attention to the hoses, as these often show signs of wear sooner than other more durable parts. Besides obvious leaks from hoses, inspect hoses for cracking and signs of dry rot as these can burst when pressurized (Figure 1). Places where hoses might crimp with folding booms are prone to cracking as hoses age. Engage the pump and look again for leaks. Check the pressure gauge and test the cutoff valves to be sure they are working.

Scrutinize Strainers—The job of strainers is to keep gunk from reaching and plugging nozzles. With just routine use there can be significant debris buildup with the inline strainer from the tank or the individual strainers in front of each nozzle (Figure 2). Sometimes these can be cleaned with a soft brush, other times they need to be replaced.

Next, the Nozzles—All nozzles wear over time. This leads to an increasing and irregular flow rate from nozzles and poor spray patterns. In place of uniform applications across a field, there may be streaks due to places of over and under applications. While some nozzle materials, such as ceramics and stainless steel, may be more resistant to wear, all nozzles will show signs of wear eventually.

Sprays containing abrasive materials, such as wettable powders and flowables, cause more wear to nozzles. Before conducting a catch test, be sure each of the nozzles are of the exact same type and are not mismatched. Start your sprayer with the clean water and observe the pattern from each of the nozzles; look for streaks and clogs. The pattern from each nozzle should be the same. Run a 30-second or 1-minute catch test for each nozzle, output from each nozzle should be within 5% of the average output from all nozzles. Nozzles that are worn or cannot be unclogged need to be replaced and the catch test repeated.

Regularly Recalibrate—Now that your sprayer is working properly, it needs to be recalibrated; new strainers and nozzles can change the spray output. Calibration should be done at a minimum of once a year, but for those who use a sprayer more frequently or after changing to different nozzles (going from flat fan to hollow cone, for example) recalibration must be done more often.



Figure 1. Crimps in hoses may lead to cracking (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK).

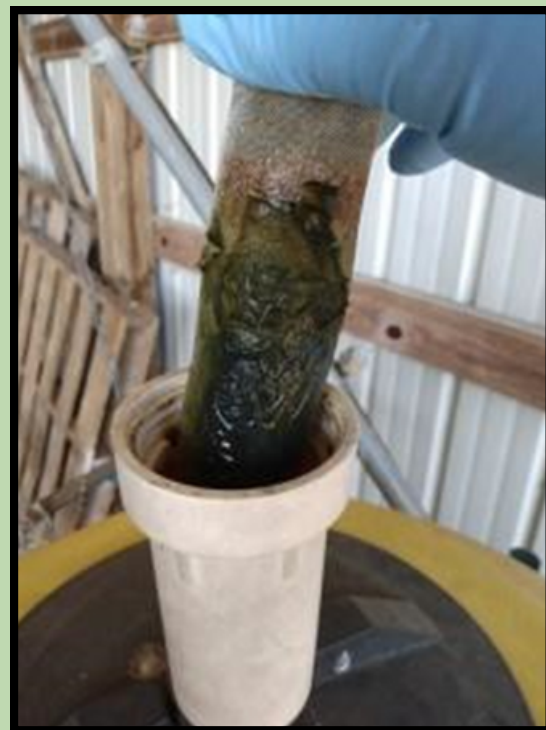


Figure 2. Check strainers regularly and clean or replace them as needed (Photo: Ric Bessin, UK).

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Lexington, KY 40506



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