

# Live Christmas Trees



**ROGER S. BOLGER**  
**HORTICULTURALIST**  
[WWW.ROGERBOLGER.COM](http://WWW.ROGERBOLGER.COM)

Live Christmas trees can add a special touch to the holidays both in your home and in your landscape, but as live trees, they require special care. Live trees usually come with a heavy root ball wrapped in burlap. Do not lift the tree by its trunk or drop it onto its root ball, since this will damage the roots. Instead, lift the tree by the root ball itself, or carefully roll the root ball along the ground.

Prepare the planting hole for the tree right away. Dig a hole twice as wide and the same depth as the root ball. Store the soil where it will not freeze. Fill the open hole with wood mulch to keep it from filling in with water which may turn to solid ice.

Store the tree upright and outdoors in a location sheltered from winds and direct sun. Keep the root ball moist, but not excessively wet. Seven days before bringing the tree into the house, condition it gradually to warmer temperatures by moving it to an unheated shed or garage.



**Blue Spruce**



**White Pine**

Once the tree is in the house, place the root ball in a large waterproof tub to protect the floor. Display the tree in a cool location and avoid all heat sources such as heating vents, space heaters and fireplaces. Use Christmas tree lights that give off as little heat as possible. **Do not keep the tree indoors for more than three days.** If the tree is exposed to warmth for too long, it will break dormancy and the tree will be injured by cold temperatures when it is moved back outdoors. Keep the root ball moist, but not wet, as before.

After the holiday, move the tree back to the unheated garage or shed for at least seven days to allow it to become acclimated to cold temperatures again. Remove the mulch from the planting hole and remove the burlap from the root ball. Place the tree in the planting hole and backfill with the stored soil. Water the tree with warm water and cover the planting hole with plenty of the wood mulch to prevent rapid freezing.

## Recommended trees:

*Picea glauca*  
*Pinus strobus*  
*Picea abies*  
*Tsuga canadensis*

Blue Spruce  
White Pine  
Norway Spruce  
Canadian Hemlock