Selecting and Preserving Holiday Trees  
By BJ Jarvis  

Today’s families try hard each year to select a “good” tree and keep it green and beautiful throughout the holidays. Here are some tips to finding a healthy, fresh tree and keeping it nourished though the next 4-6 weeks.

**Fresh**

To survive the entire holiday season, select a tree that retains a large percentage of its needles. It is hard to use color as a gauge since many trees are now painted green.

Flexible needles should not come off in your hand. Another reliable test is to hold a tree up a few inches off the ground and tamp it firmly on the ground. A fresh tree will lose only a few, inner needles. If a large number of needles fall to the ground after several choices, move on to another lot.

**Keeping the Tree Fresher, Longer**

Once your holiday tree is home, make a fresh, clean cut across the bottom of the trunk to open up water-conducting tubes, and set in a pail of water. Trees can absorb up to a gallon of water each day so be sure your stand’s reservoir can hold enough water so you don’t have to refill more often than you’ll remember. As long as the tree is able to absorb water, it will stay reasonably fresh and fire-resistant. Once the reservoir dries, a seal of pitch begins to form on the cut and the tree is no longer able to absorb water. To remedy this, it may be necessary to re-cut the stump again, or the tree may become a fire hazard.

After the holiday, recycle your tree, rather than adding to the landfill. Take it to one of Pasco County’s recycling centers where they will chip trees or consider keeping through the winter outdoors. You can use the tree as cover for birds and other wildlife or cut boughs can be used to cover frost-sensitive plants on especially cold nights.

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