

Garden

Hoke Agricultural Extension News

by Willie Featherstone, Jr., Agricultural Extension Agent

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE FRESH

The following questions and answers are provided for your information in extending the best appearance possible of your Christmas tree.

QUESTION: Why do some cut Christmas trees shed their needles when brought indoors?

ANSWER: Experience and research indicate that species, genetic differences within species, climatic factors, when the trees were harvested, fertilization practices and probably the biggest reasons, moisture content of twigs and foliage are involved.

Eastern White Pine and Virginia Pine, along with true Firs including Fraser and Concolor and Douglas Fir, generally retain their needles without serious loss after harvest if the trees are properly cared for. On the other hand White and Norway Spruce can shed their needles prolifically after being indoors only a few days.

All trees will normally shed excessively if allowed to dry out. Based on research conducted by university researchers in Connecticut and other institutions, needle loss can be minimized by placing trees in water as soon as possible and keeping a supply of water for the tree's use throughout the Christmas season.

QUESTION: What happens if the water supply is interrupted after a cut tree is brought indoors?

ANSWER: Research conducted on one of the problem species—White Spruce indicates that shedding can be minimized by selecting a tree cut for the shortest time, by recutting the butt so as to remove wood plugged with pitch and dirt, and by placing the recut tree immediately in a continuous water supply. Interrupting the water may

be worse than no water supply at all.

QUESTION: How much water will a cut tree use indoors?

ANSWER: In general the larger the tree and the warmer and drier the indoor atmosphere the more water the cut tree will use or transpire. Research conducted on White Spruce and White Pine for a period of three weeks indicated that medium dense trees six feet in height can use from one to two and a half pints daily.

Initial water consumption was two to three times greater than the three-week average, especially for the larger trees.

QUESTION: Is there anything that I can add to water to make my Christmas tree last longer?

ANSWER: Not really, a continuous water supply will maintain or increase the moisture content of twigs or needles and will help prevent needle loss.

However, research conducted with home remedies and manufactured products to date indicate none of the additives provided any clear cut benefits over use of water alone for needle retention or for maintaining moisture content of twigs or needles.

The use of additives also dilutes the water.

QUESTION: Are cut Christmas trees safe to use in the home?

ANSWER: We believe that cut trees properly stored outdoors and then maintained in a continuous water supply indoors present no real hazard. Research conducted with held branch tips at the apex of a 2.5 inch flame of a Bunsen burner indicated that twigs with a high

moisture sputtered and charred until the needles were consumed but did not burn when removed from the flame.

In other words, the tree did not support combustion once the source of heat was removed. Dry twigs and leaves continued to burn however when removed from the flame. In all tests conducted the only twigs that supported combustion were some from White Spruce held dry indoors from seven to 14 days and a few from trees removed from water for 24 hours and then replaced.

Twigs from trees maintained continuously in water indoors charred but did not support combustion when removed from the flame. Additives had no effect on ignition time of twig samples.

This Bunsen burner flames test of course is a severe test and a marked contrast in ignition times between cut trees maintained in water and such common items as paper and cotton cloth is clear from the following information.

A White Spruce stored outdoors for seven weeks placed in water indoors for three weeks required twelve seconds for ignition.

The same species cut fresh but placed in the house with no water ignited in seven seconds. Trees are composed of cellulose, as is paper, and will burn if they dry out.

Kept fresh in a water supply, most species will not support combustion. Safety tips are: Remove the accumulation of dead needles in your home.

Recut the butt and immediately place the tree in water when brought indoors to permit maximum water uptake of twigs and needles. Because larger trees may initially use several pints of water daily, the water reservoir should hold at least a gallon to insure a continuous water supply throughout the Christmas season.



LOOK OF DECEMBER--Trees naked of leaves stand against a cloudy December sky on U.S. 401 north of Raeford. The picture was taken recently.

Accent On Agriculture

A longing for the "good old country life" has prompted much of the urban expansion into rural areas. People are attracted by the green trees, fresh air, and a place to have a small garden.

However, in some parts of the country where most of the food is imported from other areas, people have begun to cry out for more locally produced food. Farmers' markets have sprung up in many cities and people enjoy the "old fashioned marketplace" type of environment while they shop for fresh vegetables and negotiate over prices with the farmers.

Unfortunately, many of these

same people who take the lead in calling for more locally produced food are the same ones who call for stopping the normal sights, sounds and smells of our agricultural enterprises. Calls for ordinances preventing spraying of pesticides and spreading of manure are frequent. Many towns attempt to restrict normal agricultural operations on farms that border residential developments.

It seems that people are saying, "Yes, I want local agriculture, but not in my backyard."

So, the trend continues... more urbanites into rural areas who want to "live the country life" and who

are the first to call for preservation of agricultural lands. You can preserve all the land you want, but if people don't understand the facts of agricultural production and continue to regulate farmers' every move, you won't find any farmer to farm the land that's been preserved.

Local Tobacco Farmers Urged To Vote 'Yes' Dec. 16

John Sledge, president of the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, is urging flue-cured tobacco growers to vote "yes" on December 16 for continuation of marketing quotas and price supports.

"This is by far the most important referendum in the history of the tobacco program," Sledge said. "The outcome could very well help decide the future of our industry."

He said it is "most urgent" that growers not just approve the program, but demonstrate their overwhelming support and therefore leave no doubt in anyone's mind that they back their program one hundred percent.

Sledge said the new "no-net-cost" program, the result of many touch-and-go negotiations, represented a constructive effort by growers to answer the critics of the program.

"A clear signal must now be sent to the new Congress that growers are unified and fully believe in the soundness of their tobacco program," Sledge emphasized.

A two-third majority of those voting is necessary to retain the tobacco program and, failing this, there would be no poundage quota, and no price supports on the 1983 crop.

**Christmas Parade
Saturday - 2:00 p.m.**

Farm Focus

by Richard Molten, Extension Livestock Agent
Banks Wommemaker, Extension Field Crops Agent

RAT AND MOUSE PROBLEMS

Usually about this time of year people begin to notice rodent problems around their home.

Many times they think that rats and mice are moving into their homes from the cooler outdoors. That is not always the case.

In fact, many times the cooler weather keeps us inside more than usual, so we only notice a problem that has existed for some time.

Any one who has had a rodent problem will agree that they can cause a lot of problems.

Rats and mice are all known for the damage that they can do to food stores and agricultural supplies.

That damage can really add up in monetary terms. One estimate by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare puts the direct damage to food stores and other materials in the range of \$100 million to \$1 billion worth every year.

That doesn't include the amount they contaminate with feces, urine, and hair.

It is also believed that rats and mice cause as many as 25% of the fires of unknown origin on farms by gnawing on the insulation of electric wires. In other words, rodents are very severe economic pests.

Also they have been known to act as disease carriers. Just a few of the diseases rats have been known to transmit both directly and indirectly are rat-bite fever, leptospirosis, salmonellosis, trichinosis, murine typhus fever and plague.

Mice can also be carriers of most of those plus rickettsialpox.

However, because of health and sanitation practices today, these diseases are no longer as serious a problem as they once were.

The key to rodent control on the farm and in the home is to use a combination of three control measures.

First and foremost, clean up all areas that could provide shelter for rats or mice. That includes junk piles, old boards, clothes piles, and overgrown areas.

Second, rodent proof all areas that can be. When you do that, you need to be conscious of the fact that mice can get through an opening as small as one-quarter inch.

The third and final measure to use is rodent baits.

There are basically two types of rodent baits; single dose and multidose. Multidose baits usually contain warfarin, chlorophacinone or diphacinone. They must be fed on a continuing basis for 10-14 days to be effective.

Two single dose baits available in North Carolina are Havoc and Contrac. They can kill a rat or mouse after only a single feeding. Two important points to make here is that anytime you use a rodent bait make sure you read the label on it completely and keep it out of the reach of children or pets.

If you have a rodent problem, use these three control measures and you should be able to bring it under control. Remember, start with cleaning-up first, then rodent proof as well as you can, and finally, as a last resort use a rodent bait.

MORE RABBIT FACTS:

...Rabbits have never been known to carry rabies.

...The heaviest rabbit on official record weighed 23 pounds.

...Rabbit meat can be prepared over 300 different ways.

...Domestic rabbits have no communicable disease injurious to humans.

...Most felt hats are made from rabbit fur.

...Domestic rabbit is an all white meat.

...The Cape Fear Rabbit Breeders Association is having their annual Rabbit Show in Raeford, December 11th, at the National Guard Armory starting at 9:00 a.m.

FARM MACHINERY AUCTION SALE
Lumberton, N.C. Thurs. Dec. 16 at 9:00 A.M.
at
LLOYD MEEKINS & SONS AUCTION YARD
Located on Hwy. 211 E., Bladenboro Rd.
Hauling available - If you have anything you want hauled in, call us.
Tractors, farm equipment, trucks, cars, tools, or anything else you want to sell.
SALE CONDUCTED BY
LLOYD MEEKINS & SONS REALTY & AUCTION CO.
Lumberton, N.C. 810-730-9547
Dillon, S.C. 803-774-6883
Sumter, S.C.

FASHION Jewelry
SEE A SPECIAL SHOWING
OF FINE JEWELRY SATURDAY & SUNDAY
Dec. 11 & 12 9 to 5 Sat., 1-5 Sunday
Come Early And Register For Several Drawings
To Be Held Both Days
YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE PRESENT TO WIN
SEE YOU AT
Clim's Potpourri
W. Prospect Ave. Hwy. 211 W.
Located Between Buoy's Bait & Tackle & Stone Fireplace Center

WARM GIFT IDEAS

A KERO-SUN® PORTABLE HEATER IS THE ECONOMICAL GIFT THAT SPREADS WARM FEELINGS ALL YEAR LONG.

Give the warm, money-saving gift that your family and friends can use wherever they go - a Kero-Sun® portable heater. There are 10 models and sizes to choose from. All 99.9% fuel-efficient. All cost just pennies per hour to operate. They're smokeless and odorless in operation. Easy to operate. Safety-tested and listed by Underwriters Laboratories.

A Kero-Sun® portable kerosene heater can be used in the living room, kitchen, basement, vacation home, work place, add-on room - and many more applications.

PEOPLE REMEMBER YOU ALL YEAR LONG WHEN YOU GIVE A WARM, MONEY-SAVING GIFT.

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