

- METRO

Christmas trees are the quintessential decoration of the holiday season, often erected in front windows gleaming with decorations, trinkets and lights. Much thought goes into selecting a tree and turning it into the centerpiece of a celebration.

Holiday celebrants with no personal preference may struggle with the decision to buy an artificial or real tree. Those who opt for a real tree may think their only options are the cut trees available at local tree lots. But those interested in a tree that will last far beyond the holiday season can select a potted Christmas tree, all the while adding an eco-conscious element to their holiday celebrations.



Selecting a live tree is an environmentally sound choice. Trees that have their roots intact can be transplanted outdoors after Christmas. This reduces the waste associated with tree disposal and provides various benefits to the environment, as the trees act as a natural air filter while providing shade and wind barriers. An evergreen tree, which remains lush and green all year long, is also an ideal habitat for backyard creatures. Trees help control excessive moisture issues in the soil by drawing up water for survival, and can help prevent erosion of soil in more

arid climates.

Caring for a potted tree takes a bit more effort than a standard cut tree. There are a few steps that need to be taken to ensure its post-Christmas survival. You can purchase the tree several weeks in advance of the holidays, provided you water the tree frequently and keep it outdoors in the cool weather in the weeks leading up to the holiday. Select a tree variety that is hardy to the specific zone in which you live and will acclimate to the climate and soil conditions. A local nursery should be able to guide you to the right evergreen.

Because you intend to plant this tree after the holidays, it is a good idea to choose the location where the tree will eventually grow and dig the hole as early as possible before the ground freezes and becomes difficult to excavate. Consider digging the hole in the autumn and then filling it with leaves or a tarp until the time comes to plant the tree.

Roughly two weeks before Christmas, you will need to transition the tree for indoor use. Neglecting this step may result in shock to the tree, which can cause it to wilt or die. Place the tree inside of a garage or a shed where it is generally warmer than outside but not yet room temperature. After this two-week period, move the tree inside where it will have a place of honor for festivities. Do not leave the tree inside the house for more than 10 days. It will need to be moved back into the garage and then outside before planting.

Many evergreens are durable, and the majority of the decorations you use on the tree should not harm it. But be careful not to tug or break branches. Use small lights that do not generate much heat; otherwise, you risk damaging the boughs with burns. When the tree is indoors, it's also essential to keep it in an area that gets filtered sunlight and is away from heating vents that may dry it out. A spot in front of the front window may be the best location.

Potted Christmas trees make an eco-friendly addition to holiday traditions. They can be planted year after year, adding some aesthetic appeal to the backyard while benefitting the environment.