



DECEMBER

2007

FRESH CHRISTMAS TREES

After selecting the perfect cut Christmas tree from Johnson's, there are several considerations to prolong its season. Remember, heater vents, fireplaces and TVs all work to dry out trees. Here are some hints to keep your tree fresh.

- Cut 2" off the trunk.
- Put tree in water using **Tree Life**. (Be sure it is taking up water. A tree can drink a gallon of water the first day and up to a quart a day after that.) Now there is a liquid Tree Life, easier to dissolve in water and pine scented. Both kinds are animal safe in case your pet takes a drink from the tree stand.
- Add **Tree Moist™** to the water. These polymer crystals will absorb water, then release it to the tree; reducing the chance your tree will go dry.
- Spray with **Wilt-Pruf** or **Wilt-Stop** to help retain moisture.
- Keep the tree in a shady place until it goes inside.
- Put the tree up a little later or take it down right after Christmas and use a **Tree Bag** to keep needles out of the carpet.

TREES and SHRUBS

Now is the time to prepare plants for winter. Fertilize with **ferti•lome Tree & Shrub Food**, if you haven't already. The best defense your plants have against insects and disease next spring is to feed them now. A healthy plant withstands stress better and recovers faster than a weak plant.

All plants benefit from mulch at this time. It helps moderate soil temperature and retain moisture. If the winter is dry, water once a month during warm spells. Evergreens, broadleaf evergreens, perennials, bulbs and pansies are some of the plants most in need of winter moisture.

CHRISTMAS for the BIRDS

As you decorate your tree and house inside remember the birds' trees outside. The obvious first choice for bird ornaments would be a feeder. Several smaller feeders are preferable to one large feeder. The seed will stay fresher and there won't be such a fight for perching space. Also, you can tailor different types of feeders and seed to whatever specific birds you want to attract. Give the squirrels their own feeder and they won't bother the birds as much. And don't forget water—an unfrozen water source is as attractive as seed to birds in winter. Once these are in place your outdoor tree will be adorned with colorful and lively "ornaments."

COOL-SEASON LAWN

Visions of sugar plums may drive out all thoughts of lawn care during the holiday season. But the soil isn't frozen and that means grass roots can still take up fertilizer. If you seeded in late October, that new grass, as small as it may be, needs to be fed. Also, if you didn't get your second or third application of **ferti•lome Winterizer** on—do it now. This late feeding of Winterizer promotes winter hardiness and keeps grass green longer. Most of the fertilizer will be stored by the roots and used to help new grass thicken up in spring and help established lawns green up earlier. Don't be concerned if you can't water in the Winterizer. Cool temperatures mean there is really no chance of the fertilizer burning the lawn.

HOUSE PLANTS

December is the month to bring color into your home with Poinsettias and Christmas Cactus. Both plants have similar needs, with Poinsettias requiring more moisture.

- Keep in a sunny window.
- Cool temperatures, 65°-70°, are best to prolong blooms.
- Keep out of cold or hot drafts.
- Christmas Cactus - let the top one inch of soil dry, then water.
- Poinsettias - let soil surface dry slightly, then water thoroughly.
- After watering, discard excess from saucer.

The Norfolk Island Pine is another traditional holiday house plant. Generally, this plant likes a spot next to a bright window and prefers to be kept barely moist.

WINTERIZE ROSE BUSHES

To protect roses from winter injury:

- Water rose bush well.
- Use a rose collar to hold mulch around bush.
- Fill the collar with organic mulch. We recommend cottonseed hulls.
- Protection should be approximately 12" above ground to cover graft area.
- Prune back only canes that are in your way or that will whip in the wind. Leave major pruning until April.

These steps are also helpful when overwintering tender plants like butterfly bush, crapemyrtle and perennials.