

NEWS RELEASE

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Horticulture Decorations

Once Thanksgiving has passed, it is time to think about Christmas decorations. Evergreen trees, poinsettias, holly, live wreaths, Amaryllis, and more are commonly used horticulture decorations. It seems that the decorating begins a little earlier each year. This makes using any live plant material more challenging. Moisture is necessary in keeping these live plant materials fresh.

If you cut your own tree, it will be fresh. We have a cedar tree that we have been cultivating for the past four years. This is the year it will be cut down. It will go straight into a pail of water. Those first few days the tree will take up gallons of water. Over time the rate slows down. This indicates the plugging of the water conducting tissues.

A tree from a tree lot is another option. The trunk will need to be cut again a few inches above the field cut. This opens the cells to conduct water. Gradually, they will get plugged up. It should be moist for a three-to-four-week period. It is this longer period when the tree is up in a warm environment that dries out the tree. The shorter time the tree is up, the safer it is.

The best approach to keeping the tree fresh is to keep giving the tree water. Try not to let the tree stand dry out while the tree is in it. No additives to the water have proven necessary.

Greenery will add to the holiday decoration choices. It should be as fresh as possible. It will not be absorbing any more water. For these we want to trap the moisture in the plant. There are products that can be applied to the plant material to slow down the moisture loss. Read and follow label directions on any of these products.

Poinsettias, Amaryllis, holiday cacti, and other plants will need to be watered as needed. Check them regularly. Be cautious and do not overwater. Poinsettias like a constant moist media. Other plants like it drier. Picking up the pot gives a good indication of the amount of moisture in the soil. If it is light, water. When the pot is heavy, skip watering. Always water until excess comes out of the bottom of the container. Discard the excess water.

With a little attention, our holiday greens will be kept fresh and enjoyable this holiday season.

If you have any questions on any horticulture topic, please contact Gregg Eyestone at the Riley County office of K-State Extension. Gregg may be contacted by calling 537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu