



November Tips

TREES, SHRUBS AND GROUNDCOVERS

by Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

- If you are an early Christmas tree shopper looking for a live tree for the holidays, be sure to select a Christmas tree that will survive in your climate and soil. In Virginia, white pine (*Pinus strobus*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), and blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) are excellent choices for live Christmas trees that can also be planted outdoors after the holidays.
- The next time you see a squirrel storing nuts in your yard, remember that he is planting a tree! Watch the squirrel's nut stash tum into a beautiful tree, a source of oxygen, shade, and a new wildlife habitat.
- To decorate window boxes and other outdoor containers for the holidays, insert evergreen branches into the soil. If the soil is frozen, soften it with warm water first. Balsam fir branches will hold their blue-green needles until spring. Try bittersweet, holly berries, and strawflowers for color.
- To protect an upright evergreen from snow damage, drive a strong stake into the ground near the trunk of the tree. Tie a rope to the bottom of the stake and, using the rope, wind up the branches in a circular pattern around the tree. This is a two person job on large trees. At the top, secure the rope to the stake.
- Pine cones, sweet gum balls, and seed pods of many plants, such as redbud and milkweed, add a beautiful touch to holiday ornaments. You can still collect many of these, if you take a walk along a hedge row or through a park or a weedy field.
- Twig arrangements are different and easy to make. Collect twigs with unusual features; for example, winged elm, corkscrew willow, redosier dogwood, and crepe myrtle.
- Check guy wires around newly planted trees to be sure those sections still cover the supporting wires or ropes so they will not damage the trunks in windy weather.
- Continue deep watering of evergreens until freezing weather occurs.
- Cut away suckers from the base of lilacs, forsythia, and crape myrtle.
- Erect wind breaks to protect newly planted evergreens, especially tender, broad-leaved types, such as Japanese holly and camellia.

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- If roses are to be planted, do so before the ground freezes, and water well.
- If there is any evidence of scale on trees and shrubs, spray with dormant oil in late fall and again in early spring.
- Avoid transplanting shrubs and trees on sunny or windy days. On these days, the roots are exposed to too much light or drying winds, putting undue stress on the plant.
- Nurserymen and landscape architects may be less busy over the next few months and be more available to help you with plans for improving your landscape.
- Where circumstances necessitate very late planting of trees and shrubs, remember to mulch the area heavily to keep the ground thawed so roots can become established.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dom, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist.

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