



Dear *Extension's Successful Gardener* E-tips Subscriber:

In this, our last e-tips of the year, we wish you a happy holiday season. We also send out congratulations to Joe Freeman for having a Fraser fir from his Avery County farm selected to grace the White House this year. Joe and wife Linda presented the tree after Thanksgiving to First Lady Laura Bush.

If a lovely North Carolina Christmas tree is part of your home's decorations this season, we have some tips to keep it looking its best.

Gift Ideas: Treat Yourself and Your Gardening Friends

- *Extension's Successful Gardener* newsletter is published 10 times per year and is packed with information for North Carolina gardeners, from the JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus, Enviro-tips, Q&A, Garden Spot, monthly gardening tips, and more! A one-year subscription is \$12.95 and can be ordered at www.successfulgardener.org or at (919) 513-3112. Gift subscriptions are available. For a gift acknowledgment to be sent before Christmas, along with the Jan/Feb 2008 issue, please order by Dec. 18.

Christmas Tree Care and Other Seasonal Decorations

- Keep the Christmas tree and all holiday plants watered and protected from hot or cold drafts. Christmas trees may take up lots of water the first day or two so keep a close eye on them. Christmas trees are not dangerous as long as they are green and pliable. If they dry out, they become dangerous.
- There are a few insects that might hatch between the time a live Christmas tree is cut and the time you bring it in the house. Scale and cinera aphids are the ones most reported. None of the insects will be a problem inside. Aphids can be treated with insecticidal soap before the tree is placed inside.

- If you suffer from allergies, it's not a bad idea to spray off the tree with a water hose and allow it to dry before bringing it inside.
- Keep good pruning practices in mind when collecting greenery from landscape plants. Use sharp pruners and make cuts at branch angles or leaf nodes.
- Muscadines are typically pruned in January but you can take a few limbs to make a wreath without a problem.

Seed and Tree Orders

- Order gardening seed. On vegetable gardens you should experiment but don't plant your entire crop with a new variety.
- Most mail-order companies ship fruit trees during the dormant season. Place your orders now so that they will come in time for early spring planting.

Winter Pests

- Control scales with horticultural oil during the winter. Two applications two weeks apart are recommended.

Fruits and Vegetables

- In the piedmont and coastal areas it is ok to start pruning mature apple and pear trees, but hold off on pruning plums and peaches until February or March. In the mountains it is safest to not prune any fruit trees before the end of February.
- Carrots, parsnips, beets and turnips can be dug all winter if the ground does not freeze. In the mountains, you may want to cover the bed with a few inches of straw to prevent freezing.
- Remove and destroy dead asparagus ferns.
- Plant one-year-old asparagus crowns in the garden in December. Mulch well after planting.
- Cover strawberry beds with straw or row cover fabric after nighttime temperatures are consistently below freezing.

Houseplants, Landscape Plants, Power Equipment, Leaves

- Houseplants may need to be watered more often during the winter due to dry indoor air.
- It is fine to plant landscape plants anytime the ground is not frozen. After planting, water well. Mulch with bark or pine needles.
- Continue to rake leaves as they fall. Leaves can accumulate and choke turfgrass.
- Winterize power equipment such as the lawnmower before you store it for the winter. Drain gasoline from the tank and then start the engine and allow it to run until the remaining fuel is consumed. Clean the underside of the mower and blades and spray with a thin coat of WD-40. This will ensure that your mower will be ready for the spring season.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension Centers are in all 100 counties and the Cherokee Reservation. For a local contact go to www.ces.ncsu.edu.

Happy Holidays!

Extension's Successful Gardener team wishes you and yours a joyous holiday season!

Until next year, Happy Successful Gardening!

