

**December 4, 2015**

**AGRIVIEW**

**By: Rick Hirsch**  
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**Plants play an important role during the Christmas holiday season. Christmas trees, poinsettias, holly, mistletoe - all have various uses.**

**Christmas tree selection can be one of the more enjoyable aspects of the holiday season. The acquisition of the Christmas tree has truly turned into a family affair as everyone has their own ideas as to what constitutes the “perfect tree”. Fresh trees need a little help to stay fresh and beautiful through the holidays. When you and your family shop for a “real” tree, there are a few simple guidelines to follow in selecting and maintaining your tree choice.**

**A tree needs water, just as cut flowers do. Some trees will use as much as two gallons of water overnight when you first cut them. The first step, then, is to put the tree in water as soon as you get it home. Trees that have been cut for more than several hours will need a fresh cut of 0.5 to 1 inch off the bottom of the trunk to remove the seal that the tree has made and allow it to absorb water.**

**Determine where in the home to display the tree. This will help in determining the needed height and whether all four sides must be suitable for display. Freshness is important when selecting the tree. Hold a branch about six inches from the tip between your thumb and forefinger, and pull your hand towards you as the branch slips through**

**your fingers. The needles should adhere to the branch and not fall off in your hand. A fresh tree will have a nice fragrance and a good green color.**

**One extremely important decision is where to put the tree or rather, where not to put the tree, place the tree away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, radiators and TV sets. Be sure to turn off the tree lights when you leave your home and before you retire at night. A fire caused by a burning Christmas tree can have a devastating effect on your holiday season. Do not use combustible decorations, and check all electric lights, cords and connections before you begin decorating. Also, don't use lighted candles or lights with worn or frayed cords.**

**Since real plants are becoming increasingly popular and most people have enough space for at least a few specimens, container plants are becoming quite popular. Furthermore, they make excellent Christmas gifts that keep on giving pleasure and enjoyment throughout the year.**

**Container plants have several advantages for most households. Portability and their small space requirement are two major points.**

**When grown in containers, plants can be easily moved from one place to another. Thus when the flower is at its peak, it can be displayed in full view where the gardener wishes. Then, when it is not as attractive, the plant can be moved to another location. An added bonus for mobile home and apartment dwellers is that when they move, the plants can be taken with them and provide an "instant landscape" at the new location.**

**Another nice thing about container plants is that they do not require much space. Once again, this is a big "plus" for apartment and mobile home residents. Flowering plants as well as varieties producing fruits and vegetables may be used.**

**Since each container can have different soil conditions, a greater variety of species**

can be grown than in a garden that is limited to the areas existing soil plants with various requirements as far as soil, water, pH, light and other elements are concerned may be grown.

As long as the plant's cultural requirements are met, almost any plant can be used for a container specimen. Before selecting a plant, the successful container gardener determines where the plant will usually be located and the amount of available sunlight, moisture and protection present.

Besides the well-known annual and perennial flowers, deciduous or evergreen trees, shrubs and vines may be used. Annuals usually prefer at least a half day's full sun, but most tropical evergreens do well with less.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- December 8<sup>th</sup>** - **Pesticide Applicator Training - Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Overton - 5 C. E. U.'s - \$30.00**
- December 12<sup>th</sup>** - **Dash for Cash Livestock Clinic - Henderson County Fair Park Complex**
- December 12<sup>th</sup>** - **Hunter Education Class - 7:30 a.m. - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens - 903-676-2277 for more information and to register**
- December 13<sup>th</sup>** - **Dash for Cash Livestock Show - Henderson County Fair Park Complex**
- December 18<sup>th</sup>** - **Trinity Valley Ag Chemical Seminar - 8:00 a.m. - Mabank Fire Station - \$25.00/person - 6 C. E. U.'s**

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