

# Tree Care Information for Retail Lots in Cool Market Areas

The cool, moist conditions that occur in areas such as the coastal portions of the Pacific Northwest and Northern California provide near optimal conditions for maintaining the quality of cut Christmas trees. The key to maintaining maximum freshness in your trees is to protect them from heat, sun, and wind.

Ideally, trees awaiting sale to consumers should be stored at temperatures from 34 to 50 F with high relative humidity. When these conditions do not occur naturally, there are a number of steps that can be taken to maintain the freshness of the trees on your lot.

An important second step in providing consumers with high quality trees is to give your customers a few tips on how to properly care for their tree once it leaves your lot.

## Care in Storage

- When possible, arrange for multiple deliveries of fresh trees.
- Avoid piling trees on hot parking lots or against south-facing brick or concrete walls.
- Store trees upright or in shallow piles.
- Never store trees in the sun and always protect them from drying winds.
- Maintain high relative humidity around stored trees. Mist trees or store them in locations where they are exposed to natural rainfall to minimize moisture loss.
- Sell "first in, first out."

## Care of Displayed Trees

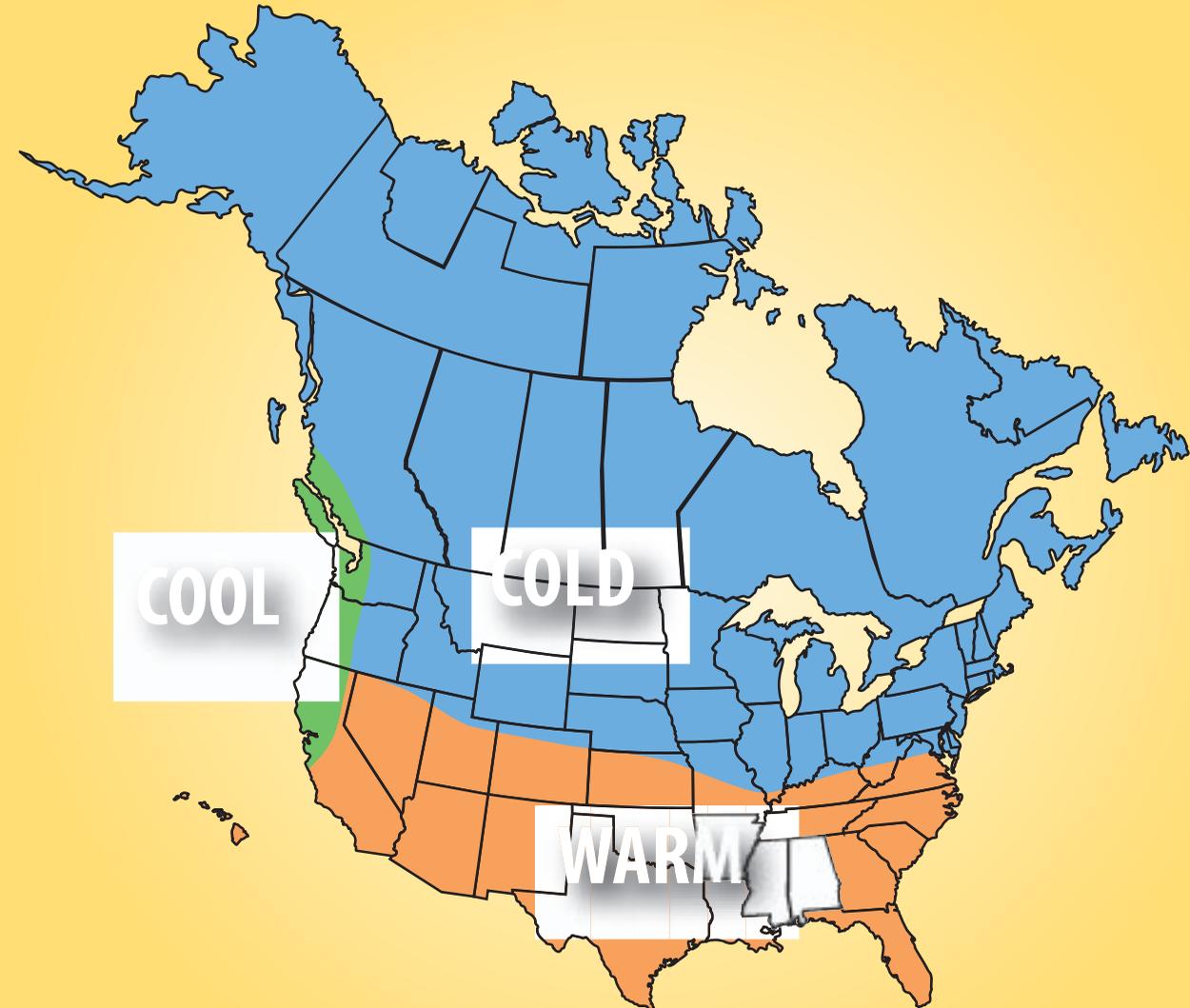
- If not previously shaken, shake trees to remove dead needles prior to display.
- Protect trees from direct exposure to sun and wind.
- Where trees are displayed in tents or other structures, the structures should be well vented to avoid head build-up.
- If unusually dry conditions occur, maintain high relative humidity in the displayed area by spraying water on the surface of the ground or by misting trees at night.
- Monitor tree freshness and discard trees that show evidence of excessive drying and/or needle loss.
- Recut the base of the tree for the consumer and emphasize the benefits of displaying trees in water holding stands.

These are general recommendations and additional steps may be needed to protect trees from extremes in environmental conditions that may occur at your retail location. For additional information on the handling and care of Christmas trees, check out the following link:

<http://www.ba.ars.usda.gov/hb66/contents.html>

*Prepared by Gary Chastagner and Eric Hinesley, Edited by the Scientific Research Committee of the National Christmas Tree Association*

# Caring for Real Christmas Trees



# Tree Care Information for Retail Lots in Warm Market Areas

Rapid drying of trees can occur in warm, dry market areas such as the Southwest and warm, humid areas in the Southeast up through Virginia. Heat and drying winds can rapidly reduce the quality of freshly cut Christmas trees in these areas. Heat damage can result from direct exposure to the sun or transfer of heat from asphalt and concrete surfaces. Lack of appropriate ventilation can also result in heat build up in storage structures like tents, trailers or containers.

The key to maintaining maximum freshness in your trees is to protect them from heat, sun, and wind, but also to use water to maintain high humidity in your storage and display areas.

Ideally, trees awaiting sale to consumers should be stored at temperatures from 34 to 50 F with high relative humidity. If these conditions do not occur naturally, there are a number of steps that can be taken to maintain the freshness of the trees on your lot.

An important second step in providing consumers with high quality trees is to give your customers a few tips on how to properly care for their tree once it leaves your lot.

## Care in Storage

- When possible, arrange for multiple deliveries of fresh trees.
- Avoid piling trees on hot parking lots or against south-facing brick or concrete walls.
- Store trees upright or in shallow piles.
- Never store trees in the sun and always protect them from drying winds.
- Protect trees from high temperatures by storing them in refrigerated trucks set on wet-cycle, by icing loads in storage containers, by covering with moist burlap, or storing them under shade cloth.
- Maintain high relative humidity around stored trees. Mist trees to minimize moisture loss.
- To reduce mold at storage temperatures above 50F, shake trees prior to bailing to remove old dead interior needles and increase ventilation.
- Sell "first in, first out."

## Care of Displayed Trees

- If not previously shaken, shake trees to remove dead needles prior to display.
- Recut the bases of trunks and display trees in water holding stands.
- Protect trees from direct exposure to sun and wind by displaying them in shaded areas if possible.
- Where trees are displayed in tents or other structures, the structures should be well vented to avoid head build-up.
- Avoid displaying trees directly on asphalt or concrete surfaces. If unavoidable, cover the surface with saw dust or another suitable material.
- Maintain high relative humidity in the displayed area by spraying water on the surface of the ground and mist trees at night.
- Monitor tree freshness and discard trees that show evidence of excessive drying and/or needle loss.
- Recut the base of the tree for the consumer and emphasize the benefits of displaying trees in water holding stands.

These are general recommendations and additional steps may be needed to protect trees from extremes in environmental conditions that may occur at your retail location. For additional information on the handling and care of Christmas trees, check out the following link: <http://www.ba.ars.usda.gov/hb66/contents.html>

# Tree Care Information for Retail Lots in Cold Market Areas

In cold market areas, such as the inland Pacific Northwest, upper Midwest down through northern Arizona and New Mexico, the Prairie and Lake states, and the Northeastern U. S. down through Pennsylvania and West Virginia, freezing temperatures and drying winds are enemies of freshly cut Christmas trees. The key to maintaining maximum freshness in your trees is to protect them from the elements whenever possible.

Damage to trees potentially can occur whenever the natural moisture in the tree's needles freezes or when cold, drying winds remove this moisture. Freeze damage to needles occurs due to the rate of freezing and not to the rate of thawing. The greatest damage occurs when there is a sudden drop in temperature and water within the cells does not have enough time to move into the spaces between the cells before it freezes.

Lack of appropriate ventilation can also result in heat build up in display structures like greenhouses. Ideally, trees awaiting sale to consumer would be stored at temperatures from 34 to 50 F with high relative humidity. If these conditions do not occur naturally, there are a number of steps that can be taken to maintain the freshness of the trees on your lot.

An important second step in providing consumers with high quality trees is to give your customers a few tips on how to properly care for their tree once it leaves your lot.

## Care in Storage

- When possible, arrange for multiple deliveries of fresh trees.
- Avoid piling trees on parking lots or against south-facing brick or concrete walls.
- Never store trees in the sun and always protect them from temperature extremes and drying winds.
- Trees vary in their tolerance to freezing temperatures. Sensitive species, such as coastal types of Douglas-fir, need to be protected from exposure to extreme low temperatures to avoid needle loss problems.
- Minimize handling of frozen trees since this has the potential to cause extensive needle damage and broken branches.
- Sell "first in, first out."

## Care of Displayed Trees

- If not previously shaken, shake trees to remove dead needles prior to display.
- Protect displayed trees from direct exposure to sun and drying winds if possible.
- Where trees are displayed in structures like greenhouses, the structures should be well vented to avoid head build-up.
- If possible, maintain high relative humidity in the displayed area.
- Monitor tree freshness and discard trees that show evidence of excessive drying and/or needle loss.
- Recut the base of the tree for the consumer and emphasize the benefits of displaying trees in water holding stands.

These are general recommendations and additional steps may be needed to protect trees from extremes in environmental conditions that may occur at your retail location. For additional information on the handling and care of Christmas trees, check out the following link: <http://www.ba.ars.usda.gov/hb66/contents.html>

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