



## **CARING FOR BLACK OR WHITE SPRUCE CHRISTMAS TREES**

Our local black and white spruces make excellent Christmas Trees, but they need proper care in order for them to remain fresh, attractive and safe throughout the holiday season. Here are some tips on how you can enjoy your tree for a longer period of time.

### **Cutting**

As temperatures are often below zero in December, extra care should be taken when cutting down your tree to ensure that branches are not broken off. At these cold temperatures, the twigs and branches of both spruce species become brittle and can be broken off quite easily. To prevent this, don't allow the tree to fall to ground when you cut it, and avoid dragging it over the snow as much as possible try to avoid any unnecessary bending of the branches.

### **Home Care**

There are a number of different tree solutions which have been used in the past to prolong the retention of needles once the tree has been brought indoors. Research conducted by the University of Alaska School of Agriculture and Land Resource Management in 1985 compared the needle retention of black and white spruce in three solutions: water, water+bleach, and water-bleach-corn syrup. Of these, the trees in plain water exhibited the best needle retention, with black spruce averaging 17 days and white spruce averaging 25 days before moderate needle loss occurred. Both tree species in the other solutions began to lose their needles in moderate amounts after only 7 days.

It also was found that needle retention for all solutions and species was improved by keeping the trees in a moist environment. This can be achieved by using a humidifier in the room where the tree is located, and positioning the tree away from heat sources.

Before putting the tree in its stand, cut an inch or two off the trunk base. This fresh cut will allow the tree to take up water more readily. Be sure to maintain an adequate water level in the stand at all times. As fresh trees take up water at a very fast rate, check the water level two hours after setting up the tree. Check the water level at least once daily to see that it covers the bottom of the tree's trunk.

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