



Getting the best from your pot grown Christmas tree

These pot grown trees tend to be smaller than the cut ones, but they last longer and keep their needles for longer. The idea is to have the tree out in the garden once Christmas is over, so it can be an ornamental tree or be used again next year.

To ensure your tree stays as healthy as possible it's key to be careful of the change in conditions; moving the tree from a heated indoor environment to a cold, windy garden can come as a bit of a shock to the tree (or any plant in fact). You just need to give the tree time to get use to the colder conditions and plenty of water.

There are two main types of trees in pots; pot-grown and potted. Pot-grown means that the plant has always been grown in a pot whereas potted trees have been grown in the ground, then dug up and put in a pot. Your tree bought here at Madley Plants is a pot-grown tree. These trees are more expensive but they are much more likely to survive being planted out because they have not had any recent root damage.

PREPARATION Keep your tree cool and well-watered while it's indoors. To minimise the shock when moving it outside don't put it right by a fireplace or radiator inside. If the weather is particularly cold or frosty when you want it to go outside, try acclimatising the tree gently to outdoor temperatures by putting it in the garage or an unheated greenhouse for a couple of weeks first.

PLANTING THE TREE Make sure to choose a dry day when the ground is not frozen or waterlogged. It may be worth digging the hole at a warmer time and saving the soil for later, especially in areas that are more prone to freezing conditions or snow - that way, when it comes to planting the tree, the hole is already prepared. Water the tree really well to hydrate the roots and make it easy to remove the pot. Dig a hole slightly wider than the root ball and remove the tree from its pot. Plant the tree in the hole, making sure you get the correct depth - the root ball and trunk should not be buried any deeper in the ground than they were in the pot. Fill in the hole with the soil and water it well, remembering to keep it hydrated during any dry spells. If the tree looks unstable, or could be blown over by wind, then it is a good idea to stake it into position until it becomes properly established. For the best results apply a good mulch around the base of the tree and keep an eye on the soil moisture around it.

NEXT CHRISTMAS As next Christmas arrives, you have three options for what you want to do with your tree. Firstly, it can be dug up again and brought inside to bring Christmas cheer once again, but this could cause a great deal of damage to the roots and it may be unlikely to survive if you attempt to plant it outside again. The sudden temperature changes between hot and cold, plus root damage, can be fatal. Secondly, you could leave it where it is outside, and decorate it with outdoor lights. This way, whenever you look out into your garden, you can see and enjoy the tree. Finally, if you do want to bring the same container-grown tree back into the house every Christmas, why not just leave it in its pot or re-pot it in a slightly larger pot? But remember to acclimatise the tree before taking back indoors as you did when bringing it outdoors after the last Christmas.