Potted Trees

Steps to Success

- **Prepare the planting hole before the ground freezes.**
  - ★ Dig the planting hole in late October or early November, before the ground freezes. It should be at least twice as wide in diameter and the same depth as the root ball (or nursery pot) of the tree you'll bring indoors at Christmas. Place the soil from the hole on one half of a large tarp, fold the tarp to cover the soil, and place a thick layer of shredded leaves or straw over the tarp to keep the soil from freezing or place the soil in a wheelbarrow and store it in a place that won't freeze. Then fill the planting hole with bags of leaves or straw so that snow and ice will not accumulate. If you did not prepare the hole ahead of time, no worries.

A live tree should be indoors for just a couple weeks, and then moved outdoors after your celebration. (Shorter time indoors the better)

- **Live Christmas trees can only be indoors for a couple weeks.**
  - ★ Kept indoors any longer and the tree may break dormancy and is unlikely to survive. Store your live tree outdoors in a protected location, such as a porch or shed. A week before you plan to bring it indoors, move it into an unheated garage or porch to help it adjust to being indoors. Consider spraying the tree with an anti-desiccant such as Wilt-Pruf to keep the needles from losing excessive moisture. Bring the tree into the house ideally just a few days before Christmas. Evergreen trees must not be inside for more than a couple weeks.
- **Generous watering is key.**
  - ★ The entire root ball must be kept moist -- but not sitting in pooled water. Place the tree away from direct sun and heat sources when inside.
- **Get that tree in the ground ASAP!**
  - ★ Take the tree back outside as soon as possible, ideally on a mild day. If the weather isn't ideal, keep it in the same unheated space as before until the time is right. Place it in the hole you prepared in the fall, keeping the top of the root ball slightly higher than ground level. Our potted trees are in a biodegradable pot, so no need to remove the pot! Backfill around the pot with the soil mixture you set aside in the fall and water it well. There will be 2-4 inches of pot sticking up, cut the edges of the pot back so that water does not pool around the tree trunk. Then mulch around the tree.
- **What if you didn't plan ahead in the fall?**
  - ★ If a hole is not readily available for your tree, put the tree outdoors in a place well protected from wind and sun. Mulch the root ball heavily with straw or bark mulch. The goal is to protect the root ball -- just as it is when it's in the ground. Water the root ball on mild days. When spring comes, you can move the tree to its final location.