

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



12 DAYS OF GIVING

The holiday season is a special time for children. Fill the holidays and all year long with the 12 days of Christmas.

Day 1 — Children interested in gardening enjoy holiday decorating with their families. Plant the seeds of growing and nurturing at a young age by making a fresh evergreen wreath. Or make edible ornaments to feed the birds outdoors.

Day 2 — Children love caring for houseplants. Start with something easy like pathos or spider plants and expand from there. Children love touching a sensitive plant and watching the leaves fold up, observing a prayer plant or a Venus Fly Trap.

Day 3 — Children enjoy creating terrariums in soda bottles, fish bowls or glass containers. Choose plants that like high humidity like the Venus Fly Trap. Once established they are quite easy to care for.

Day 4 — Besides foliage plants, children enjoy the fragrance of herbs. Herbs grow easily on the windowsill. Start the herbs from seed by providing all the necessary ingredients. Potting soil or

seed starting mix, growing containers, a clear plastic cover, seeds and fluorescent lights are needed to get started.

Day 5 — To encourage recycling, put together a worm composting kit. The bin can be kept in the basement or garage as long as temperatures are not above 80 degrees F or below 30 degrees F. Worm composting, as well as any other type of composting, is an excellent way to show children how nature renews itself.

Day 6 — When the weather warms in the spring give children a garden spot they can call their own. Allow them to plant what he or she wants (within reason of course). The pride and self esteem that gardening can bring children is amazing. Allow them to develop the responsibility involved when caring for plants: Let them see for themselves that nature is not perfect and the garden doesn't have to be either to be successful and enjoyable.

Day 7 — Many children love collecting flowers and leaves. A leaf and flower press neatly preserves their beauty. The pressed flowers can then be used to create beautiful gifts for others or even

for use with school or other educational projects.

Day 8 — Take a walk with your child. The early winter season contains beautiful scenes from nature. Stop and enjoy the movement of the leaves, the quietness of a snowfall, the beauty of undisturbed snow, and the wonderful music that accompanies the Christmas season. It would be a shame to miss any of the above. They are all free and yours to enjoy.

Day 9 — Think of someone for whom you can brighten their day with flowers. Deliver flowers and a short visit for no particular reason would brighten most anyone's day or evening. Who knows, they may even turn around and do it for someone else.

Day 10 — Plan your child's gift-giving around service to others. Visits, letters, telephone calls, picture exchanges, written life histories, or copies of a favorite garden stories or poems, are often appreciated more than costly gifts purchased from the store.

Day 11 — Plan your time so you can spend meaningful time with others. Giving of your time to be with others is a gift cherished by the receiver.

Day 12 — In the spirit of giving thanks give gifts from the heart. Read to your children. Reflect on your own families' gardening story. Tell them a story about who loves to garden, what they grew and why Peter Rabbit has come calling in the past. Inspire children to want to know more of their family heritage. Happy Holidays!

Tips For Planting Live Christmas Trees

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) — More and more families are using a live tree to celebrate Christmas. There are some important things that you need to remember if you do purchase a live Christmas tree. One of the most important things is to plan ahead and decide what are you going to do with the live tree when Christmas is over. Bob Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture at Penn State University, has the following suggestions:

- Select the exact location where the tree will be planted before you purchase the tree. Remember that the tree will grow to a large size over time so make sure your selected space allows for adequate growing space for the future.

- Dig the transplant hole now before the ground freezes. Make sure that there is more than enough room to plant the tree. Allow plenty of space for the root ball when you dig the hole.

- Fill in the dug hole with loose leaves and cover an area several feet past the diameter of the hole with a 4 to 6 inch layer of mulch to prevent the soil from freezing. Rope off the area to prevent someone from falling into the hole.

- Mulch the back fill soil, or store it in a warm location so it will not freeze.

- Before Christmas, store the tree outside until it is time to take it inside. Once inside, keep the tree in a cool location no longer than five days, and keep the root ball or root system moist.

- After Christmas, take the tree outside and place it in a sheltered location for several days. Never replant the tree during a period of extreme cold. When the temperatures are in the 30s, plant the tree in the prepared hole.

- Remove the mulch from the hole. Measure the depth of the root ball to see if soil needs to be added or removed from the hole to keep the top of the root ball at the surrounding soil level.

- Set the tree in the hole and backfill with the saved soil. Firm the soil against the root ball as it is added to the hole. When the hole is filled, apply a 4 to 6 inch layer of mulch over the root planting hole and several feet beyond.

- Next spring, water the tree well as soon as soil temperatures begin to warm and the soil thaws. If the soil does not freeze after planting, you may need to water the tree during the winter months, especially on windy days.

By following these steps you should be able to enjoy your tree during the Christmas season and for many years to come.

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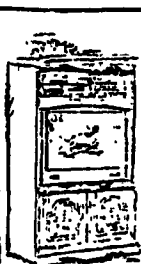
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