At Brown’s Tree Farm, we grow 16 species of conifer and evergreen trees for wholesale sale to nurseries and landscaping companies. We carefully dig, ball, and burlap our trees, all while making sure to protect their sensitive root systems. Then, we reinforce them with a wire basket and tie them to prepare them for successful transport or shipment.

Because we take great care in cultivating and preparing our trees and want them to enjoy long, healthy lives in their final destinations, we have prepared this guide to help you provide proper care for your trees during transport, transition and planting.

Transporting Balled and Burlapped Trees
Whether you’re a wholesale customer purchasing directly from Brown’s Tree Farm or an individual who’s purchasing your trees from one of our customers, be sure to consult the following tips for successfully transporting your trees.

Proper Wrapping
To prevent balled and burlapped trees from sustaining wind damage during transport, you will need to wrap them in a breathable, mesh tarp to protect branches, needles or leaves. Wind can damage your trees even if you’re transporting them a short distance and even if you’re traveling at a low rate of speed.

Be sure to use a breathable tarp, not one that’s solid or made of plastic. Otherwise, rapidly moving air during transport will draw water from needles and leaves. A solid tarp will also beat against the trees during transport. All of this will cause long-term harm.

Best Vehicles for Transport
To properly and safely transport your balled and burlapped trees, you’ll need a truck – one that’s sized appropriately for your order. Because our minimum order is 10 trees, you’ll need one or more flat-bed trailers to transport your order.

If you’re a retail customer transporting a single tree from a nursery, you should use a pick-up truck to handle the job. Although you may succeed in stuffing the tree into an SUV, you’ll almost certainly damage the tree and also may cause harm to your vehicle’s suspension.

Trees transported on open trucks tend to lose more water than those transported in closed ones. However, if you’re using a closed truck, do not allow the vehicle to remain standing in the sun unless the cargo area is air-conditioned. If the temperature inside the truck reaches more than 100 degrees, the trees could be damaged.

Protecting Tree Trunks
It’s also important to ensure that the trunks of the trees are not resting directly on the truck bed. You’ll want to place some old blankets or towels under the trunks to avoid damaging them during transport.

Tie Down Trees Before Transport
Be sure to securely tie the trees to the truck bed so they don’t roll around during transport. Movement can cause the root ball to crack, leading to root breakage.

Caring for Balled and Burlapped Trees Before Planting
If possible, it is best to plant balled and burlapped trees the day that you deliver them to the site where they will be planted. If you can plant them within two hours of their arrival, irrigate them as soon as they have been offloaded from the truck to keep them from deteriorating.

If you are unable to plant your trees the day that they arrive, establish a staging area near the planting site that offers shade and protection from wind. The area also must be able to accommodate irrigation. Once the trees are in the staging area, cover the sides (not tops) of the root balls with organic material such as soil, mulch, compost or saw dust to help prevent root dryness. Then irrigate your trees daily or every second day until you plant them.

Do not place soon-to-be planted trees in a garage, shed or other enclosed structure, even if the weather outside is cold.

Best Time to Plant Balled and Burlapped Evergreens
Although you can plant balled and burlapped evergreen trees at any time of year as long as the soil isn’t frozen, early spring is the ideal time to plant. Early fall offers the next best opportunity, because the soil won’t begin to freeze for approximately 6-8 more weeks. This will allow plenty of time for the trees to become established before they experience the heat of summer.

Summer is actually harder on evergreens than winter is. Still, it’s best to avoid planting balled and burlapped evergreens in soil temperatures below 60 degrees if you can help it. Otherwise, your tree may experience reduced root growth.
If you reside in a climate where winters are cold, and you plan to purchase a balled and burlapped evergreen as an indoor Christmas tree and plant it after the holidays, be sure to dig your planting hole earlier in the fall, before the ground freezes, and mulch the backfill soil to help prevent it from freezing.

After properly transitioning your balled and burlapped evergreen from indoors to outside again, you should plant your tree as soon as possible, even in freezing temperatures. Ultimately, the safest place for the root ball is in the ground, so do not attempt to keep the balled and burlapped evergreen in a garage or shed until spring. This would very likely just cause the tree to dry out. Just place the tree in the hole that you dug earlier in the fall and backfill it with the loose, mulched soil that you prepared.

When backfilling, try to avoid leaving any air pockets.

### Planting Balled and Burlapped Trees

Below are some important things to keep in mind as you prepare to plant your balled and burlapped trees.

**Spacing and Placement**

When selecting the locations where you want to plant your trees, consider their species and specific needs for sun and shade. Also, make sure that you know how wide your trees are expected to be at full maturity so that you are able to allow sufficient distance from property lines, fences, buildings and other trees.

**Digging the Hole**

When digging the hole in which to plant your tree, dig a hole that is exactly as deep as your tree’s root ball is high and at least three times the diameter of the root ball. The idea is to create a large area of loose soil that your tree’s roots can easily grow into.

You do not want the hole to be any deeper than the tree’s root ball is high, because the tree would be planted too deep into the soil and essentially would suffocate. Planting too deep is a major reason many balled and burlapped trees do not survive or thrive in their new locations.

### Placing Your Tree in the Hole

Make sure that your root ball is sufficiently hydrated. Planting a dry root ball can result in your tree’s roots remaining dry even if the soil surrounding the root ball is irrigated.

Do not remove the burlap from your tree. However, be sure to remove the rope or twine tied around the trunk or stem.

Place your tree’s root ball into the hole. Place a layer of organic material no more than one-inch thick on top of the root ball. Then, slowly fill the hole with water, allowing it to soak into the root ball, the organic material and the ground.

Once the water has drained, begin backfilling in the hole with backfill soil, gently but firmly tamping it as you go. Ensure that the soil does not slope away from the tree but remains flat, so that, when you water the tree, the water will not move away from the root ball.

### Caring for Balled and Burlapped Trees the First Few Months After Planting

Your tree will require some extra maintenance during its first year, until its roots become well-established.

**Watering**

You should regularly water newly planted evergreen trees once a week – twice a week during hot or dry weather – for the first year of their replanted life. Be sure to soak the entire area surrounding each tree and not only the soil closest to the trunk.

Also, if you live in a climate that turns cold for the late fall and winter months, thoroughly water the ground around your new evergreens in November. This will help avoid winter burn.

### Mulching and Weed Control

Mulching around your trees with two- to four-inches of organic material can help retain soil moisture, mitigate soil-temperature extremes, and also help control weeds.

Organic mulches include wood chips, shredded bark or bark chips, straw, hay, coarse peat moss and other organic materials. These materials also serve to enrich the soil as they decompose.

### Longer Term Maintenance of Balled and Burlapped Trees

Once your trees have matured, you can shift your focus to their long-term maintenance needs.

**Fertilizing**

Large evergreen trees frequently do not require fertilizer. However, if you wish to fertilize your trees, you may do so in early spring or late fall by applying fertilizer either as a surface mulch or by digging holes in the ground around the tree. When using either approach, be sure to avoid having the fertilizer come in direct contact with any part of the tree.

**Pruning**

Pruning at the wrong time of year can cause permanent damage to trees. Avoid heavy trimming in mid-summer and even avoid moderate trimming in late fall. However, pruning before or during the growing season – spring or summer for evergreens
–a will provide time for plant tissue to recover. This also reduces the susceptibility of your trees to disease and insect-borne infections.

**Winterizing Balled and Burlapped Trees**

If you’ve wisely selected trees that are intended to live in the climate in which you’ve planted them, there is little or no effort involved in helping to winterize them. However, during fall seasons of low precipitation, watering your trees before the ground freezes can help prevent winter injury. Other winterization techniques can include buffering your trees’ root systems with additional mulch and protecting the trunks of young trees with paper wrapping.

**Caring for Indoor Balled and Burlapped Christmas Trees**

If you’ve chosen a balled and burlapped tree for your indoor Christmas tree, there are some important steps to follow to ensure that your living tree will continue to thrive both indoors during the holidays and again outdoors after the holidays.

To protect and preserve your tree’s short and long-term health, you’ll need to properly transition it to an indoor environment, treat it well while it’s inside, keep it indoors no longer than 7-10 days, and safely transition it back to colder, outdoor temperatures.

1. Keep your tree watered, but don’t over water it. Baled and burlapped trees don’t require as much water as cut trees do.
2. Build-in time to transition your tree. Buy your tree early so that you’ll have time to gradually introduce it to warmer temperatures.
3. First move your tree to a garage or enclosed shed. This will help acclimate the tree to warmer temperatures.
4. Carefully choose when to move your tree inside your home. A balled and burlapped tree should remain in a home environment for a maximum of 7-10 days, so don’t put it in place too soon.
5. Select a friendly location. Choose a cool spot away from fireplaces, wood stoves, heating vents or drafts.
6. Use strands of cool, small lights. It’s best to choose small or LED bulbs to avoid minor damage that larger incandescent bulbs, which generate more heat, may cause.
7. Choose lighter ornaments. To protect your tree’s branches, it’s best to select ornaments that won’t weigh them down.
8. Move your tree back to a garage or shed after 7-10 days. This will allow it to gradually adjust to colder temperatures again for a few days before you return it to the outdoors.
9. Plant your tree. If you live in an area where the ground is usually frozen in January, dig your planting hole in the fall before temperatures drop. Regardless of temperature, be sure to water your newly planted tree well.
10. Or, keep your tree potted year-round. You’ll still need to transition it each year, and it should have a more permanent home in an outdoor location that receives plenty of sunlight and can benefit from mulch. Also be sure to water your potted balled and burlapped tree regularly throughout every season.