

Norfolk Island Pine

By

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The Norfolk Island pine is an evergreen suitable for a variety of decorative purposes. In its native habitat, of the Norfolk Island in the South Pacific, it can grow to a height of 100 feet with a trunk up to 10 feet in diameter. As a small plant, it is very uniform with branches parallel to the ground. These branches have rows of soft, bright green, 1/2 inch needles that taper to a fine point. The Norfolk Island pine is a long-lasting houseplant that grows 3 to 6 inches a year.

A large Norfolk Island pine makes an excellent display in entrance halls or foyers, and presents a good "first impression" of the home or office. Larger plants may also serve as living Christmas trees. Small lights can be effectively used to decorate these trees, however light weight decorations such as tinsel will work better, than lights. Smaller plants are handsome attractions for coffee tables, desks, and end tables. There are many ways to use this plant in decorating especially in providing that western looking atmosphere to any space.

Norfolk Island pines grow well in indirect sunlight. During the warm months of the year, they may be placed outdoors, preferably in partial sunlight. Acclimate the Norfolk Island pine to low light intensities before it is brought indoors at summer's end. If this is not done, whole branches may suddenly fall from the plant because of low light intensity levels in the home. Placing the plant in a shady spot for 4 to 5 weeks will prevent this damage from occurring. This good advice for bringing in any plant for the winter. Most plants do not like or tolerate sudden changes in light or temperature.

Night temperatures of 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit and day temperatures of 68 to 72 degrees are optimal for plant growth. However, the Norfolk Island pine will tolerate temperatures between 45 and 85 degrees. The soil should be kept only lightly moistened. This plant does not require as much water as most common houseplants. It cannot tolerate soggy or saturated soil. Water the plant so that 10 percent of the water drains to the bottom of the container. Discard this excess water. Norfolk Island pines do not require frequent fertilization. Use any

complete fertilizer and follow the manufacturer's recommendations. These pines need to be repotted every three to four years to allow for growth. Be sure to use potting soil that contains equal parts of soil, peat moss, and perlite. Potting soil may be homemade or purchased at local garden centers. Do not reuse the existing potting soil as salts will have built up. I have not noticed any problems with insects or diseases of this plant.

I can remember when I was in college I had one of these plants and even decorated it for Christmas one year. But when I was coming home for Easter that year I decided to bring it back with me. I left it over night in the vehicle thinking it would be ok, but the nighttime temperature dropped below freezing, so the next morning it was frozen. Such was my early learning experience with understanding plant zones and species selection, and knowing where the plants native is and the growing conditions in that geographic area. These are really nice plants and generally do well indoors but over time they can outgrow their area. However, this gives us the opportunity to start over with a new design.

The University of Wyoming and the United States Department of Agriculture, Sheridan county Office cooperate.