

Mistletoe

Revised 2018

Storage Conditions

Temperature	32°F (0°C)
Relative Humidity	85 to 90%
Storage Period	3 to 4 weeks
Freezing Point	25°F (-3.9°C)

Mistletoe is perishable like many foliage plants, and refrigeration as low as 32°F (0°C) is highly desirable to maintain good appearance. Even a 50°F (10°C) storage temperature is much superior to 70°F (21.1°C). Loss of moisture, as evidenced by shriveling, is one of the main causes of deterioration. Decay of leaves or berries is another cause of deterioration, especially when they have been severely damaged during handling or held at a high temperature without sufficient ventilation.

Mistletoe will keep best if packaged in moisture-retentive film bags or cartons with perforations for ventilation. If packages are not properly ventilated, the leaves and branches with their berries may fall off, leaving a naked stem. Leaf abscission is more severe at warm temperatures and with relative humidity (RH) approaching 100% in sealed bags than in perforated bags held at lower temperatures. Moisture loss becomes visually apparent as slight shriveling of stems, leaves, and berries, when it exceeds 5%. When the moisture loss reaches 10 to 15%, the shriveling becomes serious. While mistletoe probably can be sold and used even after it is slightly shriveled, it is much more attractive when the leaves and stems are fresh and green and the berries white and firm.

Berry and leaf abscission and decay of packaged mistletoe are much worse at warm temperatures encountered in marketing than at temperatures of 45°F (7.2°C) or below. Research has shown that Dithane M-45, Botran, or Hyamine 3500, each at 2000 ppm in combination with alpha naphthalene acetic acid at 20 ppm, will effectively control decay and berry and leaf abscission for 2 weeks at 75°F (23.9°C). From a strictly legal standpoint, the labels of the three fungicides, Dithane M-45, Botran, and Hyamine 3500, should be checked to determine if they are registered for use on minor crops such as mistletoe. Abscission of berries and leaves is stimulated by exposure to low concentrations of ethylene. Addition of silver thiosulfate to vase water and absorption by the stems prevents the harmful action of ethylene.

The principal fungi likely to be encountered in handling mistletoe are *Rhizopus*, *Aspergillus*, *Alternaria*, and *Cladosporium spp.*

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