

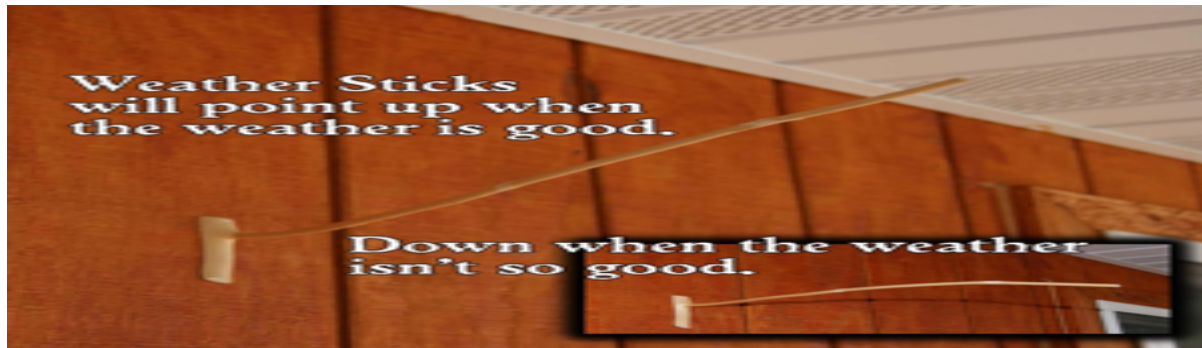
PIANO WARS: A NEW HOME



If you watch closely, you will see the plant wilt immediately after relocation and slowly come back to health even if the environmental conditions are better than before it was moved.

Have you ever potted a plant or planted a tree? The act of relocating a plant is a major shock to the systems keeping that plant alive. I have done this many times in my bonsai garden. The specimen has to acclimate to a new environment with different airflow patterns, temperature and humidity, and an altered light source location than what it was used to. If you watch closely, you will see the plant wilt immediately after relocation and slowly come back to health even if the environmental conditions are better than before it was moved. Young plants wilt faster and take longer to reestablish themselves while older, more robust plants may barely feel the change and come back much faster. This process can take a few days or a few weeks, though a plant is not truly settled until it grows out its roots, and that can take significantly longer.

Wood, more specifically a branch, from the fir tree is used as a weather indicator in novelty gift shops. If it is dry outside, the branch will bend itself to point up indicating “good weather”. If it is humid, the branch will point down to show “bad weather” or that rain is coming. The branch has been dead for some time, and yet it is still so sensitive to changes in humidity that it bends itself enough for humans to “predict” the weather from it. The lifeless wood still has the internal structure to absorb and lose water causing it to bend and twist.



When a piano is relocated, due to its mostly wooden nature, it behaves similarly to a newly planted tree or a lifeless branch from a fir tree. It bends and twists as it adapts to the new location solely because the environment is different from its previous location. New pianos are much more susceptible to this than older pianos. The piano will go out of tune quickly after being moved and the action might feel different to play. This is the wilting stage. During the wilting stage it is best to just play the piano and let it settle. After about a month, the wilting stage has ceased and it is time to have the piano lightly serviced to give it a foundation to grow off of, but this is only the beginning of the settling process.

The first year in a new place is the hardest for a piano with winter being the most brutal.

During the next few months, the piano will go out of tune again. Some of the keys may stick for a day and then fix themselves. Maybe the pedal will squeak occasionally. This is normal and nothing to fret about. Watch the problems arise and disappear and keep track of those that do not go away so quickly. Have the piano lightly serviced again making sure to fix any minor issues at that time.

After the six month mark, the piano has somewhat established itself and taken root. The tuning will be a little bit more solid and sticky keys may come and go less frequently. This is only the halfway point; there are still two more seasons with their own special charms to get through. The first year in a new place is the hardest for a piano with winter being the most brutal. There is a lot of new information it must take in and process.

After the first year is over, the piano has been through all the seasons and is ready for some more in-depth action adjustment. Neglecting additional work needed at this time will set the piano up for getting used to not working properly. It will settle in a bad position like if you slept wrong and found a kink in your neck the next day. That kink may be there for years and that much harder to adjust when finally addressed. Keeping the piano tuned at pitch (A440Hz) is equally important in this sense. The more the piano is tuned after relocating, the more stable it will be in the long run with tunings that last longer.

Pianos change a lot the first year in a new place. Be gentle and understanding because the alternative is a piano that will have issues later in life.