

# The Glorious Green Tree

By Elaine K. Stevens

Although historians differ as to the origin of decorating a live, green tree, there can be no question as to its importance during the holiday season. Christmas just would not be Christmas without a tree to decorate, whether it is a small pine branch in a pot or a stately spruce whose needles scratch the ceiling. Some households boast two or three trees, each in different areas, to satisfy different family members' ideas of what the perfect tree should represent.

This year, if you are wondering what to do to give your tree a new look, try to add something to the trimmings that will be an expression of the home. Decide on a theme that will make it a special tree. Planning the right size, colors and baubles to adorn the tree can make the difference between an ordinary tree and a glorious one. You may be able to simply add a few touches to your yearly collection of decorations and turn your tree into a personal artistic showpiece.

If you like a homespun, country look, the long-standing tradition of stringing popcorn and cranberries on long cords will not only give the tree the look you want, but will provide hours of enjoyment for your family while making the garlands. Calico and gingham shapes, cut out of fabric and sewn together, can also be added to the country theme.

A tabletop tree is the perfect setting for a manger scene at the base, providing the tree is a small one. You can create a beautifully simplistic scene by attaching tiny white lights to the branches, representing stars, and a large star at the top. If the table is large enough, such as a card table, the figures can be spread out on a dark piece of felt. Gifts can be placed on the floor beneath the table.

If children are included in the planning of your tree-trimming, suggest a candy cane tree. This is also a nice idea for households where children will be visiting. You don't need much besides the candy canes, lights, and unbreakable peppermint striped balls. One family that does this every year hosts a Cousins Party on the Sunday afternoon following Christmas, and plans games around the children's ages. The younger children always play musical chairs (to the tune of "Jingle Bells") and as each child gets his turn to be "out," he is told to pick a candy cane off the tree. Even when the candy canes are gone, the tree still looks bright and cheery with the remaining red and white decorations.

One-subject trees are growing in popularity, and if you have a hobby you would like to display, your decorations are already available. If you don't, this could put you on the path toward starting one. Small musical instruments make a charming yuletide tree. Add some scotch plaid bows to complete it. Do you have any miniature baskets around the house? You can add to them at any variety store or garden shop. Try party supply stores, too. If you like, stuff them with miniature fruits. Tie each one on a branch with bright colored yarn.

Why not start a collection of angels — any and all colors, materials, and sizes? These would not have to be packed away at the end of the holiday season, either. Think of the possibilities your tree would have with twinkling yellow lights and yards and yards of gold garland. Surely that would take the prize for a glorious Christmas tree.

Other suggestions for theme trees include white doves, which are pretty on a tree using blue lights and ornaments; shiny, red artificial apples together with plaid ribbons give an Americana look to a scotch pine tree; or start a memorabilia tree, with each member of the family adding treasures each year, including small photographs which can be mounted inside a halved ornament and decorated with gold braid.

Whatever theme or design you decide on, make sure it is one that can be carried through with excitement. Tree-trimming should be a joyful occasion. A truly glorious tree is one that is decorated with that in mind, and will reflect the special care that comes with this special season.



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