



The Topper

Stars and angels are classic tree toppers. For something more unusual, consider antlers or a thick satin ribbon tied in a bow.

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Decorating the Perfect Tree

The Tree

Start by considering an overall color scheme. For traditionalists, traditional colors like red, green, white, gold and silver never get old. Always start tree-decorating with lights, followed by garlands and then ornaments..

The Lights

When stringing lights, start at the bottom of the tree and work up. To make taking down the lights easier divide the tree into three vertical sections, and then run the lights through the interior and exterior of the branches to add depth to the design. Consider using LED lights, which burn up to 80-percent less energy and give off less heat.

The Garland

An average-sized tree (6 to 7 feet) will typically use 60 feet of garland. Create homemade garland out of beads, faux pearls, knotted twine or rope, colorful buttons and satin ribbon. Keep the garland approximately half an inch thick for an elegant look that won't overwhelm the tree.

The Ornaments

To give the tree depth, ornaments should be hung toward the inside of the tree and on the branch ends. Place them where they won't touch the branch below. Keep from overcrowding by exercising restraint and occasionally stepping back to see the tree as a whole. Use ornaments that match the theme or color scheme, or personalize the tree with homemade decorations. Create ornaments using a glue gun and string to hang family photos, baby shoes or old toys like Matchbox cars.

The Stand

An average-size tree requires a stand with a base of about 20 inches in diameter and it should hold at least a gallon of water. Only plain tap water is needed.

Do not add bleach, aspirin or fertilizer, which can reduce moisture retention and increase needle loss. Before securing the tree in its stand, cut one-half inch off the base. A fresh cut reopens the pores that take up water. Check the water level daily to ensure it stays above the tree's base. If the tree looks dry, adding hot tap water to the stand can speed up intake.