



Holiday Decorating General Suggestions

1. **Don't let Christmas lights or your tree become a safety hazard**

In order to have a safe holiday, first inspect lights for any loose bulbs or protruding wire. Secure lights so there aren't any loose ends to trip over. Use cord covers if you have young children or pets.

Position your live or cut Christmas tree away from heat sources and do not allow it to dry out! As soon as the holiday is over, get it out of the house. Get your live tree planted or your cut tree to the curb for recycling.

2. **Don't Strive for Perfection or try to please everyone**

Plan ahead, to help eliminate some of the stress. Take photos of trees you like in stores and copy the idea at home, but change it up a little to make it your own. Make notes each year for the following year: what you want to do differently or try.

The holidays are stressful enough. Instead of fretting about everything working perfectly, remember that no matter how much you plan ahead, something *will* go wrong! So, take a deep breath, relax, and have a glass of eggnog. Also realize that you can't please all of the people all of the time. Decorate to your taste, and don't worry if others don't care for it ~ they can decorate however they wish at their own home!

3. **Don't keep your Christmas lights on all night**

Blinking bulbs and mechanical Santa's show holiday spirit! But leaving them on at all hours is bad for the environment and your relationship with the neighbors. Turn your lights off before you tuck in for the night (or invest in a timer), and you'll still get invited to neighborhood barbecues come June!

4. **Don't limit yourself to red & green**

Yes, this is the classic holiday color combination. But other hues like gold, pink, and navy blue can work just as well. Turquoise and coral are also beautiful combinations, especially appropriate for the Southwest. Try a tree with pinecones from the forest, spray painted (or not), and add popcorn and cranberries as well.

If you choose a more unusual color, such as purple, pink, or turquoise, pair it with silver or white to make it more seasonal.

5. **Don't think that Poinsettias are Poisonous**

While it is true that ingesting the plant in large quantities could result in an upset stomach, it is highly unlikely to cause a fatality. Poinsettias got a bad rap back in 1919, when a child's death in Hawaii was mistakenly attributed to the plant. You may want to keep them out of your children's or pet's reach, but there is no need to keep them out of the house!



Helpful Hints for Tree Decorating

1. Choose a theme. It gives you flexibility within a context. For instance, with a rustic theme you can use antique ornaments with old lace; a natural theme will allow you to use pinecones, cranberries, pine branches, etc.; and an elegant theme may involve the use of gold or silver. But remember: it's only a theme, not a Theme Park, so don't overdo it!
2. Make putting up your tree an event. Order in your favorite meal and play holiday music. Give everyone Santa hats and age-appropriate beverages.
3. You'll always need more lights than you think. You may even want to add extra to pre-lit artificial trees.
4. If you have expensive or priceless ornaments, wire them on to the tree using 20 gauge wire.

Tree Decorating Step by Step

1. Pull out ALL of your decorations, ornaments, fabric, etc. and keep them within sight. You will also need a ladder, scissors, glue, and any other special supplies. Know exactly what you're going to use and how many ornaments and what sizes you have available; that way you won't be "completely done" and discover a whole box of prized ornaments that you had intended to use.
2. Light the tree first. This is the most arduous task. I like to light the tree a day or two before decorating, so that the "chore" part is over! Work in a dimly lit room for best results. It doesn't need to be dangerously dark, but a well lighted room can be deceiving. Start at the top and work your way down the tree. Light from the inside – out, branch by branch. If you have the patience, wrap the lights around each stem on each branch and around the trunk but hide the cords as much as possible.
3. Start wrapping ribbon or fabric from the top of the tree. Add garland if you wish at the same time. Be sure to