



MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Buy a few new decorations every year and build up a bank of Christmas memories to be recalled as you decorate your tree each year.



WHEN MORE IS MERRIER

It's time to hang the baubles. Richard Bond offers a guide to trimming triumph.

Your tree sets the tone for your approach to the festive season. Opt for the biggest tree you can accommodate and site near a socket to avoid trailing wires.

Carefully consider access to the area, to ensure you can get your tree through the doors!

A themed tree with co-ordinated decorations is nice, but part of the joy of a Christmas tree is the chance to throw caution to the wind and have fun.

"More" is my favourite way to go – a tree groaning with decorations is great to encounter and the more eclectic, the merrier. Buying a few

new decorations every year allows you to build up a bank of memories that can be recalled as you rediscover and rehang your decorations.

There is a huge debate on real versus artificial trees, but it comes down to personal convenience. A real tree gives that gorgeous pine fragrance throughout the house, but means more maintenance.

Ensure your tree stand allows you to water it (to help keep needles intact) and keep an access route clear beneath the tree so this can be undertaken regularly.

Trim ill-fitting branches to help perfect your shape.

Artificial trees are fairly maintenance-free, but invest properly in a good quality one and take a hard look at it each year to ensure it is not getting ratty – retire it in good time and get a replacement in the January sales!

Start by stringing lights – doing this before other decorations means you can remove lights easily if you have to start again. When you think you have the correct grouping stand back and look from different angles to ensure an even appearance of light throughout the tree. Don't forget to ensure your tree topper gets a bit of that light action for effect.

Remote-controlled plug sockets allow you to turn your tree lights on and off without searching around the branches helping reduce the potential for accidents. A single

HOW IT STARTED

Having a decorated tree in a UK home dates back to the 1840s when Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert brought over a pine from his native Germany. In 1848, the Illustrated London News published an illustration of the Royal Family at Windsor Castle gathered around their decorated tree. This created a trend in fashionable homes. Initially, trees were decorated with real candles, sweets and cakes which were attached with ribbon. However, in around 1880 Woolworth began selling manufactured ornaments.

remote control socket is available from around £5.99.

Lay decorations out on trays and sort into sizes. Begin by hanging larger decorations at the bottom, working your way up to the top reducing the size of decorations in correlation to the length of the branches. This will ensure that you have a balanced looking tree.

Repeat the process of standing back and, looking from as many angles as possible, adjust decoration locations so that the overall effect is even to the eye. Then sit back and wait for Santa.

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