

# Cats and Christmas Trees

You can have a Christmas tree and cat(s) at the same time! Below are some tips that will help.

## Set up the tree and leave it undecorated for a few days.

Set up the tree without decorating it for a few days. This will give your cat(s) time to adjust to it being in the house. A tree being in the house is new to your cat(s) and once decorated it can be hard for your cat(s) to resist the glittery and shining decorations. If you set the tree up without decorating it they can get used to it being there and then once the tree is decorated it isn't such a 'new adventure' to them.

## Invest in a heavy-duty tree stand.

Make sure the tree is properly and safely secured in a tree stand. Invest in a heavy base (tree stand). You may get a stand along with your tree (if you buy an artificial one) and that stand may not be sturdy enough to keep it standing should your cat(s) decide to investigate it too closely. Even if you have an artificial tree - use a base that is meant for a real tree. You can even add to the sturdiness of this base by attaching it to wood pieces. Note that when you put a tree skirt around the base of the tree no one will see the stand it is in anyway.

## Anchor your tree to the ceiling or wall.

You can also anchor the tree to a wall. This is a great way to ensure the tree doesn't topple if your cat(s) start to investigate it too closely. Position the tree against a wall in front of a large picture. Then remove the picture and secure the tree to the wall using fishing line and a strong hook. After Christmas is over, and the tree comes down, you just remove the fishing line, put the picture back, and no one will even notice!

Another way to anchor a tree is to place the tree under a spot where you have a hanging plant (hanging from the ceiling by a hook). Remove the plant, and tie the tree to the ceiling plant hook with fishing line. Again, after Christmas, put the plant back up and no one will be the wiser!

## Decorating your tree.

When you begin to decorate, leave the bottom 1/3 or 1/4 plain, without decorations, to avoid temptation by your cat to play with the decorations. Once some of the decorations are on, add more to the bottom 1/3 or 1/4 a few days later. Again, the cat(s) will have had some time to adjust to the sparkling decorations before you add them where they will be in paws reach.

## Tips on decorations and other ideas!

Do not use tinsel on your tree. Tinsel is very dangerous to cats, especially if swallowed.

When choosing ornaments, choose those that won't be too tempting for your cat(s), for example, decorations that dangle a lot or are really lightweight are really tempting. Try to find ornaments that are heavier and don't dangle a great deal.

Before putting the lights on your tree, coat the cords with Bitter Apple (available for purchase in the ARL's Animal House store) to prevent your cat(s) from chewing on them.

You can thread the cord through a piece of PVC tubing right where it plugs into the wall to further prevent your cat(s) from chewing the cord. Since PVC tubing is typically white in color, you can paint the tubing a dark green color so it isn't noticeable.

Hang your ornaments with ribbon or decorative cording instead of using ornament hooks. Ornament hooks can be very dangerous to a cat(s) or other pets that may swallow or chew them. Coat the ribbon or decorative cording with Bitter Apple so your cat(s) won't chew them. The ornaments can then be tied securely to the tree.

If your cat shows an interest in the tree place a corrugated cardboard scratching post nearby. You can also grow some 'kitty greens' for them (i.e. cat grass or catnip if you usually give your cat catnip) and place them near the tree. If you place things like the cardboard or 'kitty greens' near the tree, the cat(s) tends to be less interested in chewing or climbing the tree and more interested in the cardboard or 'kitty greens'.

