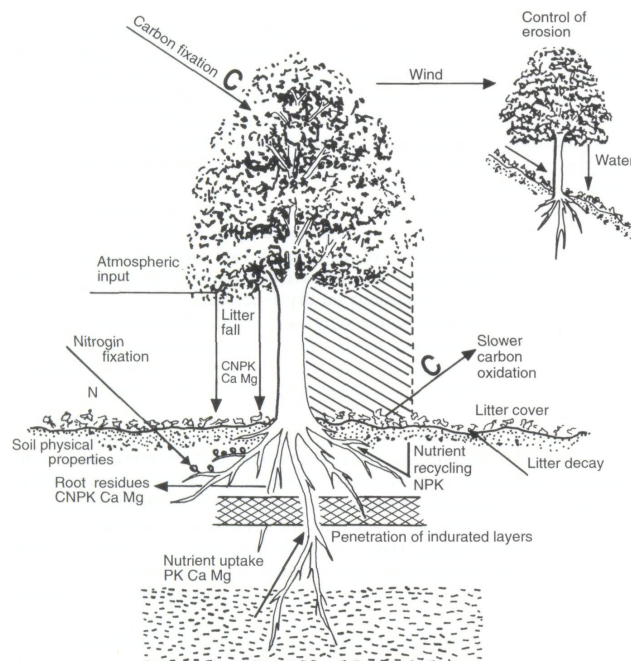




Building MiniTrees of Lights



Building Mini-Trees

Easy to build and always a crowd favorite.

By Fred Garvin



Looking for a super-easy project to add some dimension to your display? Think mini-trees. Chances are you've heard about and might have even wandered what they were. I went digging for some history and will share the tricks of one way to build them.

Best as I can tell, there was a pretty bad winter in 1992 and Chuck Smith ended up losing a bunch of shrubs in front of his house. Since he put lights on them for Christmas and wasn't in the mood to wait five years for new bushes to grow to the right size he was perplexed. His display with lights on the bushes looked like a smile with missing teeth. Desperate for an answer he decided to build his own light bushes to fill in the gaps. After several years of experimentation the mini-tree slowly came into existence. Mini-trees are easy to build, simple to store (since they're stackable) and incredibly versatile with animated displays. At one point Chuck said he had more than 200 snaking through his yard.

Here's Chuck's way to build them using cheap floral easels. Others use inverted tomato cages. Keep in mind there are plenty of other methods but *let your imagination be your only limitation*.



Most people call them zip ties. They also go by cable ties or tie wraps. We recommend 4 inches in length. Pick your favorite color. Most home stores have them.



Zip ties are made of nylon and you need something to cut them. Fingernail clippers are a super-cheap way to go.

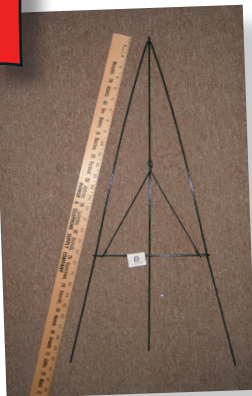


Electrician's pliers are good for cutting easel supports and pulling zip ties tight.



A zip tie tension gun pulls the tie tight and cuts it just by pulling the handle. A great time saver if you are doing a lot of trees.

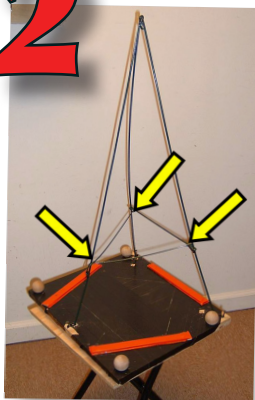
1



Start with the easel.

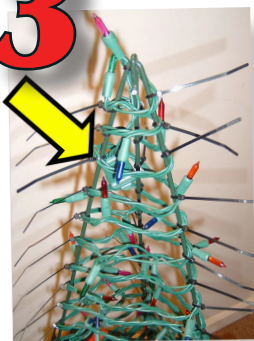
Look in the craft store floral section. This is a 30" easel. Purchase for about <\$3 (USD). When new, one leg is shorter than the rest. Measure the shortest leg. Cut the two long legs to length of short leg. Electrician's pliers work fine or use bolt cutters.

2



Anchor the braces. A bit crude looking, but I use a lazy susan to spin the trees, though you don't have to. Use zip ties to anchor the horizontal braces (see yellow arrows.) Make sure the braces are level.

3



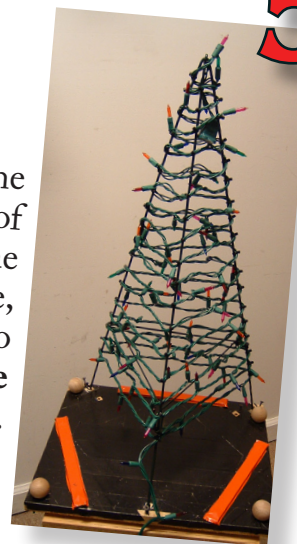
Start adding lights. Use standard mini-lights. 400 minis look good. With the female end of the light string, anchor it near the top and start wrapping the frame. It's important to anchor every point where the wire crosses the wireframe. Don't cut the zip ties yet.

4



Finish the first layer/color of lights. Most of the first string of lights will be used for the first layer on the tree. Why all the zip ties??? They serve as anchors for the rest of the lights. Zip ties are cheap!

5



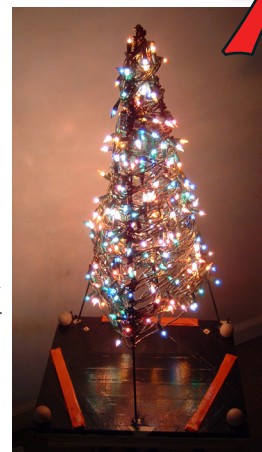
With the first layer of lights on the wireframe, it's time to cut the zip tie tails.

6



Add more lights! Keep wrapping. Use four 100 mini-light strings, each a different color. Most use red, green, blue and clear but any colors will work. Make sure the power pigtail exits at bottom and be sure to put a label on the plug showing the light color. When all strings are on the frame use more zip ties to anchor everything you can.

7



You're done!

The more mini-trees you make the more creative you can become. Your imagination becomes the only limitation.



