

Christmas trees (and lights) on display year-round

Realistic trees from an artificial one

Every December, I pulled our artificial Christmas tree from the back of a basement closet, carefully navigated around my layout, and then schleped it up the basement stairs – only to reverse the process come January.

Admittedly, the return trip to the basement was typically done in haste and I've bent or broken some of the heavy wire limbs and joints where they're attached to the trunk. This year, my wife and I both agreed that it was time to retire the old tree. However, I just couldn't set it out for the trash collector to deposit in a landfill. My wife suggested donating it, but I doubted a bent tree would offer much appeal to anyone else. Besides, I had a better idea.

I'm re-creating forested regions of British Columbia on my layout, so I'll need several *hundred* model trees to finish the scenery. I figured I'd save time and expense by clipping the twisted wire limbs into 6- to 14-inch pieces that resemble the tall coniferous trees you'd expect to find in an O scale forest.



O scale pine trees

Using a bolt cutter for the initial rough work and a pair of tin snips for shaping the foliage, I made over 200 suitable background trees from just a single artificial tree. With just a tad more effort and a few shades of green, brown, or gray spray paint, I could probably even dress my trees up enough for placement in foreground scenes.

Holiday lights for everyday use

During the after-Christmas sales I purchased a number of those inexpensive mini-lights used for decorating Christmas trees. I bought a few strands of the constant-illumination white lights and used them for interior, landscape, and spot lighting in and around my Plasticville Town Hall.

To dim the interior light, I covered a few bulbs with brown plastic pill bottles. I recently discovered blue and green pill bottles and I've also used those to provide a different effect in other structures.

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tin snips

artificial Christmas tree

