

Repairing the Christmas Tree

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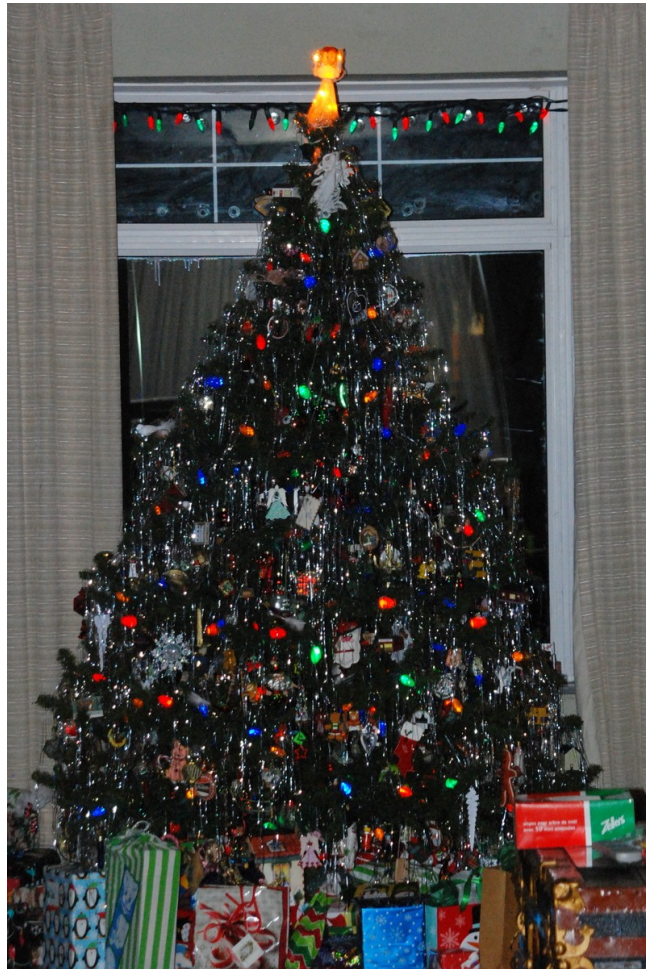
Posted 2022 November 25

This year will mark the 29th year for our beautiful Christmas tree – but unfortunately, I fear it's the last.

I discovered when I started the set-up that one of the plastic brackets that support the branches had split.



The photo shows one of the intact brackets – unfortunately I didn't think to take a shot of the split one before I started!



Here's how it works: the bracket holds the looped end of the wired branch in place by way of a pin through the centre of the loop (shown by the dashed line). Unfortunately, my bracket was split down the middle where indicated by the green arrows, and could no longer support the weight of the branch.

Did I mention I hate plastic?! I wanted to see if I could repair my tree somehow, but to do this I'd need to find a way to replace the disintegrated bracket with something sturdy enough to support the branch. There's nothing like metal for strength, so I reached for a tin can lid and my tin snips and cut a piece to form the new bracket.

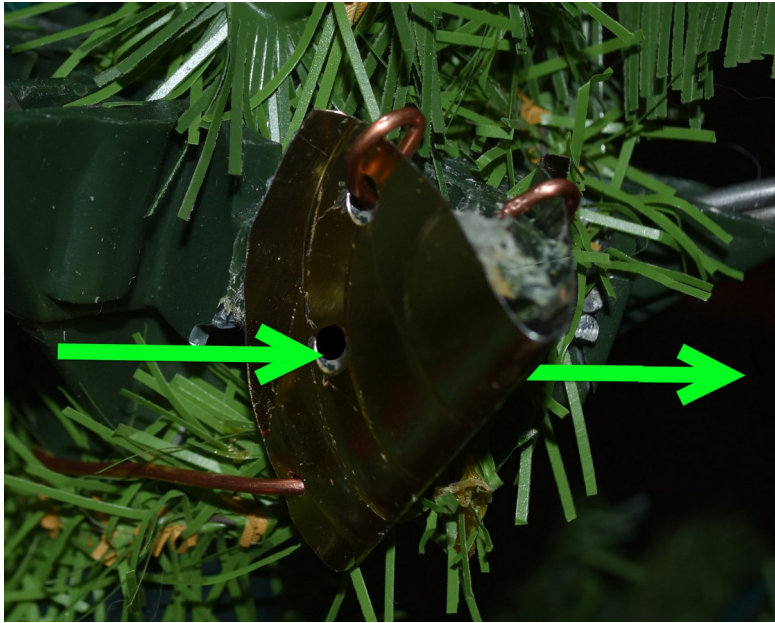


In this photo, taken as I was effecting my repair, you can see how degraded the original plastic bracket is. I bent my cut piece of metal to fit around the original bracket. Now to find a way to attach it to the trunk. Fortunately there was enough solid plastic left for me to drill a hole through so I could wire the new metal bracket in place; the wire secures the metal piece to the plastic one.



For additional stability I ran a second wire through the bottom of the metal bracket and wrapped it around the tree trunk.

Now to drill a hole through the new bracket so I could insert a cotter pin to hold the actual branch in place.



It would have been easier to drill or punch these holes before the bracket was attached to the tree, except that I need them to align so I can push through the pin that I'll use as a pivot. There was no choice but to drill through after the bracket was in place on the tree. It's awkward, but it's the only way to be sure the holes will align.

For my pivot point, I'll be using this cotter pin. With the looped end of the branch in the bracket, I'll push the pin through the hole in the bracket, through the branch, and out the hole on the other side of the bracket.

Once the pin is through the hole, the split ends can be separated and bent to hold it in place. It's fiddly to insert, but it's the best way to make this kind of repair since I couldn't get in there with my rivet tool.



The branch is secured and the tree is decorated now, and this repair will probably hold for a few more years, but I discovered that the plastic brackets elsewhere on the tree are in the process of failing as well. I guess they are just too old. I did a quick repair to those others using a piece of wire, but I fear this will be the final year for this tree, unless I can come up with a more permanent solution. Much as I hate to give in, I guess we're officially in the market for a replacement.