Christmas Tree Lights

Control with the Lutron Caséta
Lamp Dimming Smart Plug Kit

The goal:

- Control the lights on the Christmas tree
- Automatic On/Off
- Easy access to turn them on or off

The Existing setup

- Tree lights have a floor controller
- Not automatic
- A little inconvenient

The Lutron solution

- Mom won this at a curling event in early 2019
- One look at it and she turned it over to me, the “Tech son”
- Our house:
  - No floor lamps
  - It was never setup … until now

Reminder:

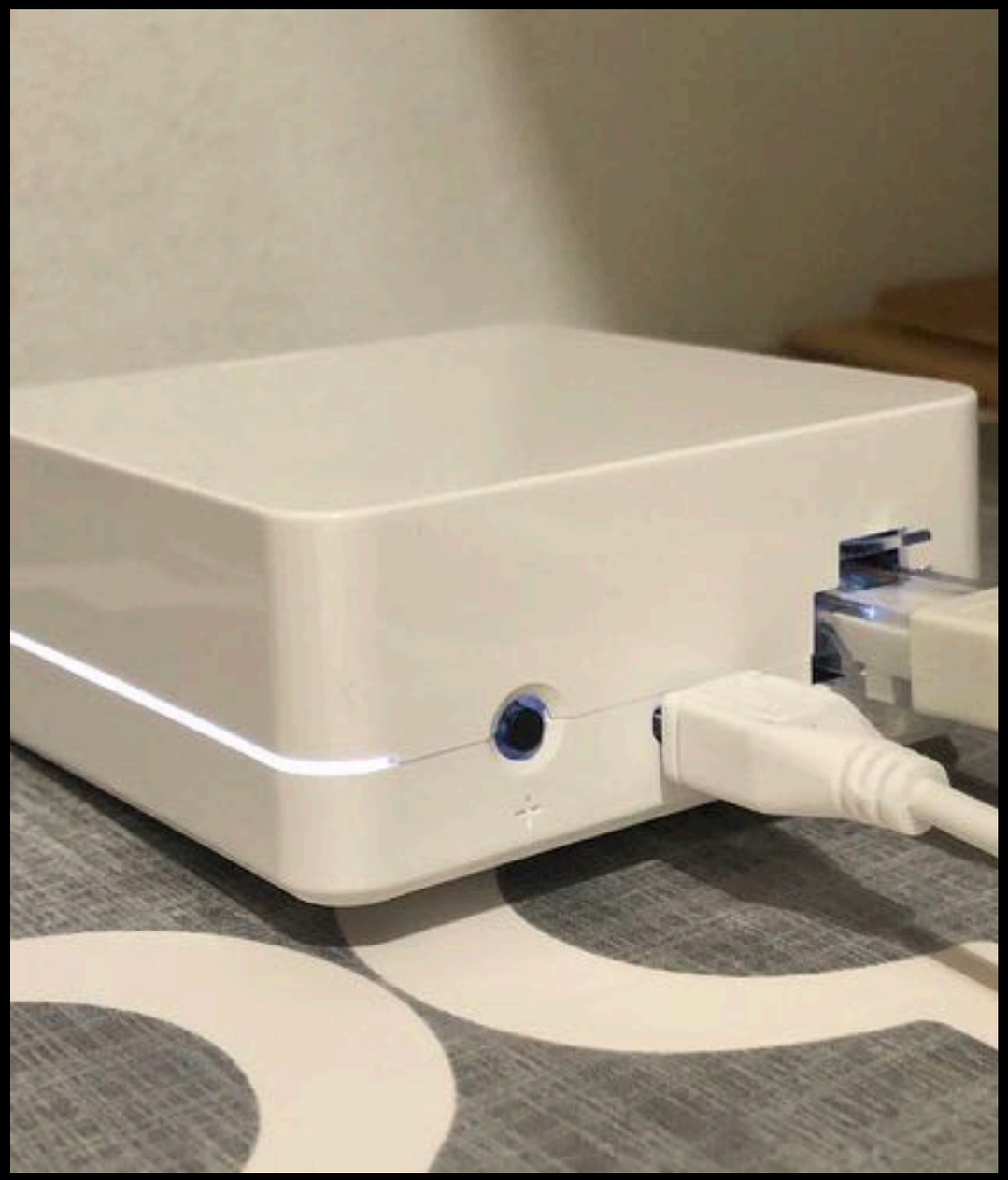
- This product has a few features that I didn’t need and/or didn’t work with my config. Specifically, “dimming”
- Our tree lights aren’t dimmable but can change “presets” (e.g., colour, twinkle). This tool cannot automate that control and I’m not disappointed in that at all

Components

- Lutron Caséta “lamp dimming smart plug kit”
  - 2 Pico Smart Remotes with detachable stands
  - 2 plug-in smart dimmers (two pass through plugs
  - 1 Smart Bridge (brains)
- Christmas tree with LED lights
  - 2 prong plug with an in-line on/off “physical” switch and a separate LED controller (to choose the preset)

Tools

- Bridge requires:
  - Wired Internet connection
  - electrical outlet
  - iOS or Android app (free)
  - Lutron account
  - Pen or paper clip
- Password Manager (highly recommended!)



Setup

- Included a multi-lingual sheet of paper the size of normal travel map unfolded
- Several numbered boxes with diagrams showing the process for setup
- Plug in the Bridge and connect it to an ethernet port
- Use the app to setup the device

Foibles

- The firmware needed updating (via the app and the pen to press the reset button)
    - Advertised as 8-15 minutes on the app
    - Keep the app in the foreground during the update
    - After 20 minutes, it failed and required me to restart the process
    - Success the second time after about 10 minutes

After the Bridge

- Connect the smart dimmer (fairly straight-forward)
- Connect the Pico remote (fairly straight-forward)

Moment of truth

- Plug in the tree
- Make sure the lights are working properly, and leave the inline switch in the on position
- Unplug the tree and plug it into the smart dimmer
- Plug the smart dimmer into the electrical outlet
- Press the smart dimmer on/off, the pico on/off, and the app control of on/off

Coup de grâce

- The app includes:
  - Schedules
  - HomeKit and Siri integration

Schedules

- Triggered via
  - specific times, or
  - Dawn/dusk triggers (based on location data)
    - Max is 4hrs on each side of each trigger

HomeKit

- HomeKit
  - Additional layer of complexity
  - Must enable in the Lutron app and choose: Lutron or HomeKit
  - Must make sure the devices are identified correctly (easy to mix up)
  - Start process by adding the Bridge (similar to adding CC to ApplePay)
  - BUT — Introduced a bug (solved by unplugging and re-lugging the lights)

names

Siri

- “Hey Siri, turn **on** the Holiday lights”

Price

- For me - free except for my time
- Now that I have a Bridge, I can add up to 70+ devices into my home
- Lowes.ca sells the kit I received for $242!!

Kitchen Pendants

- Three LED lights that turn out to be too bright at 100% so we'd like a dimmer
- Single Lutron dimmer (not smart) costs $35
- A single pole smart dimmer costs $80 (amazon.ca)
    - Pico remote and Siri included …

My experience

- The instructions, videos and app are the keys to success!
- Firmware updates for “old hardware” are inevitable
- It remains too difficult for non-techies to contemplate this install - it needs to be more like adding AirPods to an iPhone
- If this is as far as I go with the setup, it will never be worth the price

Questions?