

RUFFLE YOUR FIR

Area Christmas
tree farms let you
cut your own



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file

A helpful elf may help you select your tree.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel file

Warren Church walks through his cut-your-own Christmas Tree Farm in Royal Oaks.

Christmas trees

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The search for the perfect tree can be a fun family outing

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Too often in our busy lives, the rituals of the holidays can become another chore on our list of things to do: "Get Christmas tree."

Instead, obtaining a Christmas tree can be turned into a family outing that will add fond memories of the holidays. Surrounded by the Santa Cruz Mountains, we're lucky to have numerous Christmas tree

farms surrounding us less than an hour's drive away. You can plan exactly which farm you want to visit or make it an adventure by selecting a tree farm along one of the major mountain roads such as Summit Road, Old San Jose Road or Highway 9. Of course there are numerous lots with already-cut trees, many going to nonprofits such as the one run by the Santa Cruz Host Lions at the Elks Club in Santa Cruz, but if you have the

time, make a day of it.

Several of the farms serve hot cider, offer diversions and glimpses of the ocean in the distance. Trees cost about \$40-\$50 depending on size. Think about packing a picnic lunch to keep your energy up for hauling the tree back to the car.

Here are a few of the many tree farms in Santa Cruz County. How do you find them? Just take a drive down a windy, mountain road.

The Johnson Farm

16385 Two Bar Road, Boulder Creek, 338-0422. Directions: One mile north of Boulder Creek on Highway 9. Turn on Two Bar Road. Go two miles to The Johnson Farm. Web site: www.farmerrob.com.

Hours: Daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m., starting the day after Thanksgiving through the third Sunday of December (unless they sell out sooner).

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, Scotch pine. Pre-cut: noble fir, grand fir.

Features: Picnic area, weekend hayrides (weather permitting), farm animals, gift store, a portion of all pre-cut tree sales will be donated to the "Make a Wish" foundation.

Tree

Continued from Page B1

Ward Ranch

4820 Bonny Doon Road, Santa Cruz, 423-6975, www.cachristmas.com/Santa-Cruz.html. Directions: Go North on Highway 1 about 8 miles to Bonny Doon Road, turn right onto Bonny Doon Road. Go 3 miles and the road splits around big redwood trees. Turn left again to stay on Bonny Doon Road at the Bonny Doon Vineyard Tasting Room, Go 7/10 of a mile to 4820 Bonny Doon Road and turn right into driveway.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday after Thanksgiving and weekends through Dec. 23.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, incense cedar, Sierra redwood, white fir, Scotch pine and grand fir.

Crest Ranch

Christmas Tree Farm

12500 Empire Grade Road, Santa Cruz, 426-1522, www.crestranch.com.

Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily through Dec. 16.

Choose and cut: More than 20 tree varieties, Douglas fir, Arizona cypress, white fir, Scotch pine, Sierra redwood, Atlantic cedar, sugar pine, blue spruce, and Greek fir.

Warren Church

Christmas Tree Farm

470 Hidden Valley Road, Royal Oaks, 722-0819, warren-churchtrees.com.

Directions: take Highway 1 to Salinas Road, then right on Werner Road (second right after golf course), then right on Elkhorn Road to Hidden Valley.

Hours: Noon-4:30 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. weekends, day after Thanksgiving until Dec 16.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, white fir, Monterey pine.

Four Winds

Christmas Trees

19679 Skyline Blvd., Los Gatos, (408) 399-9020. www.four-winds-ranch.com.

Hours: 7 a.m. until dark daily from Thanksgiving through Christmas.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, white fir, silver tip, noble fir, grand fir, spruce and redwood.

Features: Covered picnic area, lots of parking, fresh wreaths and mistletoe. Free candy canes and hot drinks.

daily from Thanksgiving through Christmas.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, white fir, silver tip, noble fir, grand fir, spruce and redwood.

Features: Covered picnic area, lots of parking, fresh wreaths and mistletoe. Free candy canes and hot drinks.

Patchen California

22217 Old Santa Cruz Highway, Los Gatos, (408) 353-1615, www.patchencalifornia.com. Directions: Highway 17 to Summit Road, right on Summit Road for 50 feet and left again on Mt. Charlie Road for $\frac{3}{4}$ miles.

Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. starting the day after Thanksgiving until Christmas.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, Monterey pine, Sierra redwood and others. Pre-cut: Noble fir, Douglas fir, Monterey pine.

Features: Picnic tables, tractor rides, gift shop, stands installed, wreaths, free candy canes, hot mulled cider, boughs, tie down.

Rancho Siempre Verde

2250 Highway 1, Pescadero, (650) 326-9103, www.rsvtrees.com.

Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekends starting the day after Thanksgiving through Dec. 24.

Choose and cut: Douglas fir, Monterey pine, redwood, cedar, cypress.

Features: Hay bales, tractor rides, marshmallows, swings, picnic tables and more.

Summit Tree Farm

19333 Skyline, Los Gatos, (408)-354-3595 or cell (408)-391-4893. Directions: Take Highway 17 north to Summit Road, east, follow signs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, farm is on the right.

Hours: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. weekends, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. weekdays

Choose and cut: Douglas fir.

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