

You Can Get Your Own Christmas Tree From Tree Farms Throughout County

Customer Cuts His Own Christmas Tree



Bob Warne of San Jose poses proudly with the Christmas tree which he cut for his own use on the Howard Nielsen ranch on the Empire grade. The tree's bushy branches completely obscure Warne's hand as he holds the holiday symbol.

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Stump Contains Built-In-Yule Tree



Howard Nielson, Box 162, Bonny Doon, the president of the Santa Cruz Christmas Tree Growers association, points to

the stump of a Christmas tree which has just been cut on his

ranch. He shows the branches which will grow into another tree in a few years.

By Margaret Koch

Too early to start thinking about getting a Christmas tree? Not at all. Yes, I know the Thanksgiving turkey is barely off the table. It might sound like rushing the season to talk about Christmas trees before the turkey soup is gone.

But these trees I refer to are really special. If you are interested in planning a family outing to cut your own tree, this year, these are for you.

The are growing right now in straight, fragrant rows, just waiting for you to appear with a saw. You don't even have to own the saw. The Christmas tree plantation owner will provide it. And you don't have to be a lumberjack. The owner will tell you exactly how to cut the tree down.

There are fourteen of these Christmas tree farms in Santa Cruz county, three bordering Santa Clara county in the Loma Prieta district, with trees ready for this year's cutting. Farms vary in size with the smaller ones offering less than hundred trees for sale. The largest tree farm in the county is Crest ranch, with more than 5000 marketable trees this year.

After you arrive and park your car, you are given the saw and the instructions. Then you are free to wander about among the rows until you see THE tree.

Tall? Short? Slender? Bushy and plump? It's up to you. They have them all.

You can choose from different kinds of trees, too. Most of the farms have lots of Douglas Firs because they are the popular, traditional California Christmas tree, and some farms also have White Fir, Monterey Pine, and Scots Pine.

These are the most popular varieties, but there are others and the prices are reasonable. The six-foot Douglas Fir most families will be looking for, will cost about \$3.50.

Although the above named species are the most successfully grown at present, 17 other varieties are under trial in the county. These trials are sponsored and

supervised by the local farm advisor of the University of California Agricultural Extension service.

The first Christmas tree test plots in Santa Cruz county were started in 1948 under the direction of Henry Washburn, former County Farm Advisor. Washburn was also instrumental in the organization of the California Christmas Tree Growers, and he is regarded as the father of this new agricultural industry.

There are about 100 members at present, they meet quarterly in Santa Cruz county, and Howard Nielsen of Crest ranch is president of the group. Tree farm tours are scheduled occasionally to enable growers to exchange information and keep up with new developments.

When you have cut your tree and paid for it, be sure to keep the receipt until you get the tree home. It is illegal to cut or transport trees or greens from private property. Your receipt is proof that you have a "legal" tree in your car.

Years ago in the United States, people chose and cut their own trees from the native forest. Last year people drove to our county from as far as the Bay area to have the pleasure of choosing and cutting their own trees. Most families like the idea of a fresh-cut tree instead of the usual cold-storage Christmas tree which is cut several months ahead of the season.

Last year the demand exceeded the supply in this new agricultural crop, so it might be wise to go early. Your tree will stay fresh and perfect if you stand it up in a bucket of water in a cool place, until you are ready to take it into the house.

Have you ever considered a living Christmas tree? Two of the local tree farms specialize in potted, living trees. If you buy one of these, you can have it in the house during the holidays, then plant it in your yard to enjoy for years to come. The choice of living trees ranges from Douglas Fir, Scotch Pine, Spruce, and White Pine, to Redwood. Prices depend on the size and shape of the tree, and range from \$1 on up.

A Christmas tree excursion is an ideal family outing, but all the customers aren't families. Last year an elderly lady from San Francisco was delighted to find just what she wanted at a local tree farm.

"I haven't seen a Christmas tree like this one since I was a child, back East," she said with a hint of nostalgia.

Some of the larger tree farms provide picnic tables and rest rooms. If it has rained recently you will want to wear galoshes or boots. Families are welcome, so pack a lunch, load the kids into the car, and cut your own Christmas tree this year. You will be helping a new industry in the county, you will have fun doing it, and you will have a Christmas tree you will never forget!

The following is a list of Santa Cruz County Christmas tree farms:

Howard A. Nielsen, Crest ranch,

Box 162, Bonny Doon route.

Grider Forest, 4604 Los Gatos Hiway.

Ellen Hill, Box 57, Bonny Doon route.

Miss J. Goldman, 25255 Loma Prieta way.

Jack Robinson, Glen Haven

Christm