

Christmas tree options span from forests to lots

Local groups provide an array of ways to find a Christmas tree this season

By Aimee Rudin
Freelance Editor

Maybe it's the scent that winds its way through the house, becoming entangled in the smells of baking and frozen winter breezes. Maybe it's the lights twinkling among the branches like stars fallen to earth.

Whatever it is, for millions of people around the world, a Christmas tree embodies the holiday season. And just like people, trees come from different places in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Some trees are short and dumpy, resembling mushrooms more than evergreens. Others are lanky, stretched out and long with branches that look like they could hold up the heavens.

The finding of the tree is often a holiday tradition that varies from one household to another, and for many people where they get their tree is just as important as what it looks like.

Many community groups, schools and organizations sell trees in parking lots during the holiday season to raise money for projects and programs.

The O'Hara Catholic School, located at 715 W. 18th Ave., has been selling Christmas trees in their parking lot for more than 20 years.

"We have the best Noble firs in town," Marie O'Grady, a parent volunteer, said as she reached out and grabbed a branch of a large bushy tree. "You could go to every lot in town and you won't see trees as perfect as these. These branches will hold all your ornaments."

The O'Hara lot also sells Grand and Douglas firs, but O'Grady said Nobles are by far the most popular tree.

"These trees have been groomed to have thick branches," she said. "They come from a tree farm where they are replenished every year."

Prices start at about \$20 a tree and increase with the size of the tree. All trees are accompanied by a coupon book valued at \$50. Volunteers bundle and load trees for buyers. There are also heaters and hot cider on hand for anyone who might be chilled by holiday breezes.

Tree lots offer convenience and comfort, but some holiday enthusiasts may want a little more variety than what many lots have to offer.

Tree farms offer visitors a chance to pick out and cut down their own tree without having to conduct a forest-wide search. These farms are often privately owned and managed by families who tend to the trees themselves.

At the Pepiot Tree Farm on Highway 126 just outside of Leaburg, Howard Pepiot and his wife, Virginia, care for 1,200 trees. Each year about 200 of their trees are cut during the holiday season.

"Our season runs pretty much from the day after Thanksgiving to a few days before Christmas," Pepiot said. "It seems like the weekend before Christmas is always the last of the rush for trees."

They grow five different varieties of fir trees on the Pepiot farm: Nobles, Douglas, Frasier, Nordman and Grand. However, only the Nobles, Douglas and a few of the Frasier firs are ready to be cut this season.

"We replant each year," Pepiot said. "Most people like the bigger trees so we have to give them time to grow."

Douglas fir is the primary and often the most popular tree at Pepiot's, but many people also favor the Noble. For people looking for an alternative to a tree, or just a little more holiday decoration, wreaths ranging in size from about eight to 20 inches in diameter are also available.

"We go up above 4,000 feet in mid-October to get the boughs to make the wreaths with," Pepiot said. "They'll last until February; in fact some people keep them hanging 'til Easter."

Wreaths vary in cost from about \$14 to \$20, depending on size. Douglas fir trees cost \$18 a piece regardless of size, and Nobles range in price from \$20 to \$60.

The trees at tree lots and on farms are specially grown for Christmas. This can result in a somewhat homogenous look to the trees. For a truly unique look, shoppers may want to venture onto National Forest Land.

Christmas tree permits are for sale through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service for \$5 a piece with a limit of five trees per household. Permits are specific to a certain area and can be obtained at most ranger stations.

"When you go out to get your own tree, you know it's fresh," said Greg Koester, a frontliner at the Willamette National Forest Supervisor's

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present," Lowe said. "I found the suit in a bag the next day."

Junior journalism major Erik Peterson received a direct explanation about the existence of Santa from his father after a Christmas related slip of the tongue.

"I got a Sega Genesis, and I asked my parents for some money to get candy and my Dad was like, 'What the heck, we just got you a Sega,'" he said. "I asked, 'I thought Santa made it,' and he explained that Santa did not really exist."

Aron Glatzer is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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"We headed right back to find my living room filled with presents. To this day, I still have no explanation for this phenomenon."

Not all students have experienced Christmas magic, however.

University senior Will Lowe learned Santa Claus did not exist at a relatively young age, and his views have not changed with age.

"My dad came into my room in the middle of the night in a Santa suit and gave me a

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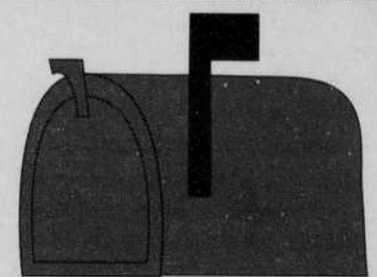
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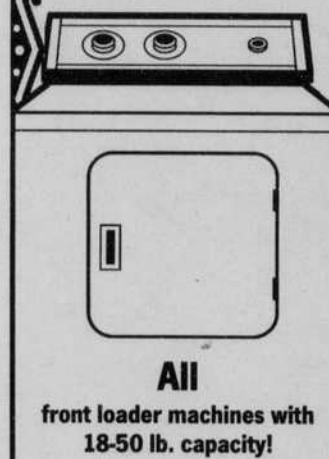


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