

Outdoors

Trimming the cost of your tree



Young children enjoy the snow while looking for a good Christmas tree to cut from Oregon's Willamette National Forest. PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Here's how to cut your own for \$5

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The first time I saw the number I nearly choked on my lunch.

U.S. consumers paid an average of \$78 for a Christmas tree in 2018, according to a study by Oregon State University.

No, that doesn't come with gold-plated ornaments.

Prices on trees are more reasonable here in Oregon — \$20 to \$25 for shorter tree, \$40 to \$60 for a nice six- to seven-footer, and up to \$125 for top of the line, according to my survey of local tree sellers around Salem.

Even at U-cut tree farms, prices on classic noble firs can reach \$14 per foot, as my buddy Zach Gilbert found after visiting a tree farm.

"We went out on a hayride, and it was fun for the family, and we had our little handsaw, but I was a little suspicious because we didn't see the prices anywhere," said Gilbert, who lives in Jeffer-

son and got his tree at a farm outside Albany.

"We found a nice tree and cut it, brought it back to pay for it ... and it was \$55!" he said. "It's not like you can just walk away at that point, but man, I'm not sure I would have done it if I knew the price."

Prices are high enough that more people are considering a program that allows cutting your own tree from Oregon's national forests — for a permit of just \$5.

Willamette National Forest sold permits worth \$3,000 in 2016, but that rose to \$5,000 last year and they're expecting even more this year with permits available online.

"There is definitely a trend of increasing Christmas tree sales for us, which is great because more people are enjoying the Willamette National Forest," said Chiara Cipriano, spokeswoman for the U.S. Forest Service.

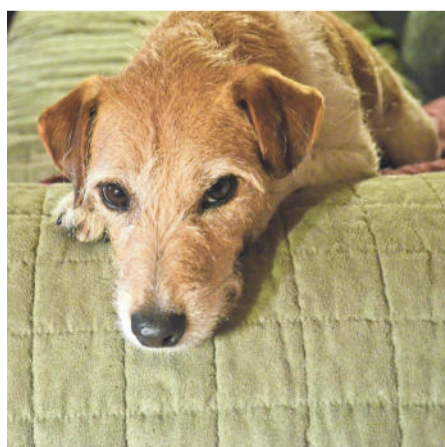
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Two Christmas trees from Willamette Forest placed at the Urness home.

The uncomfortable truth of who's really the good boy

Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist



Harry, the Miller family dog. HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Any time you get a little full of yourself, you should think about this insightful anecdote from the late Oscar-winning actor Sir Alec Guinness.

As he told it, as a rising young actor he checked his hat and coat at a restaurant and asked for a claim ticket.

The woman said that it wouldn't be needed because she knew who he was.

Guinness was pleased that he had achieved some degree of recognition.

Upon retrieving his garments and still brimming with thoughts of his success, Guinness said that he discovered a slip of paper in the coat pocket.

On it was written, "bald with glasses."

Been there, done that.

Admittedly, I've been a little puffed up lately after being recognized and complimented several times by long-time readers in such venues as movie theater lobbies and grocery stores.

The figurative scrap of paper in my coat pocket came this morning as I was tapping out this column and Kay returned from walking Harry the dog around the neighborhood.

A woman accosted the strolling duo, and they stopped to chat, although admittedly Harry was excited because he mistook the woman for the "cookie lady" with whom we cross paths frequently on our walking routes.

The cookie lady gets Harry's undivided attention because she always carries a baggie of dog treats, which she dispenses liberally.

According to Kay, the woman asked what kind of dog Harry was, and she laid out the usual spiel about how he was a "mostly Jack Russell terrier that

we got at the Willamette Humane Society.

To paraphrase, the woman said, "you know, he looks just like that dog, Harry, that's in those articles in the newspaper."

"That's him," Kay responded.

The woman was very excited to meet the four-legged media star, she added.

My inflated ego collapsed like a soggy soufflé.

I felt one-upped in the recognition category by Harry the neighborhood celebrity.

Make that one for the dog.

Zero for "balding with glasses," who apparently is making a post-retirement career out of serving as a publicist for said canine.

For his part, Harry seems unmoved by his elevated status.

He's sleeping snuggled up in his fleece blanket on his dog bed behind my office chair while I peck this out.

Probably dreaming about running into the cookie lady next time.

Go big (again)

Trucks from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Roaring River Hatchery near Scio rolled out early this week.

More than 120 rainbow trout, each

weighing between 8 and 12 pounds, were stocked at three Willamette Valley sites early this week.

Walter Wirth Lake in Cascades Gateway Park in Salem, Timber Linn Lake in Albany and Junction City Pond south of its namesake town each got about 45 of the bonus babies.

To get to Wirth, take Turner Road south off Mission Street and watch for the Cascades Gateway Park turn on the left just past the Walmart parking lot.

Timber Linn Lake is in Timber Linn Memorial Park, 900 Price Road SE, across Price from the parking lot at the Linn County Fair and Expo Center.

Junction City Pond is about 3 miles south of Junction City on the right side of Highway 99 coming from the north.

The 3-year-old rainbow trout have aged-out of the peak of their reproductive lives at Roaring River.

The "brooders," as the fish are affectionately known by avid anglers who pursue them, generally are planted on Mondays out of Roaring River if enough of them are available from the previous week's spawning.

For the latest information about the truck stops, call the hatchery's recorded brood-stocking Hotline at (503) 394-3155, then press "2."

The information is updated after the trout have been delivered.