

# It may be harder to find your perfect tree

By LISA RATHKE  
Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. — People may need to trim back their Christmas tree expectations this year.

A tight supply means some shoppers will be paying more and searching longer for that perfect Christmas tree this holiday season. But there's no need for panic buying on Black Friday as industry experts say consumers will end up with something to decorate this holiday season.

The yuletide market imbalance was created a decade ago when a glut of Christmas trees and the Great Recession combined to drive many growers out of business. Now the supply is tight and it takes eight to 10 years — the time needed to grow a Christmas tree — to boost the supply.

"It's bad. It's the worst I've seen in a long time," said Matthew LaCasce, co-owner of the Finestkind Christmas tree farm in Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. The farm sells about 10,000 trees each season and is turning down orders every day from desperate retailers, LaCasce said.

Larger retailers are doing just fine, officials say. It's the smaller charitable organizations, school groups, and mom-and-pop operators that have had to scramble for trees.

In Hawaii, Christmas tree seller Richard Tajiri said he ended up 1,000 trees short this season.

"It's going to be tough for everybody. There's nothing you can do about it," said Tajiri, who is fielding several dozen calls a day in Honolulu. "It's first come, first served."

Lovell's Florist and Nursery in Medford, Massachusetts, resorted to a hodgepodge of suppliers from Canada, North Carolina and the West Coast because the regular wholesaler couldn't deliver, owner LaVerne Lovell said. They were expecting 1,000 trees to be delivered Friday.

"It was about two days of complete panic," she recalled. "The Christmas season carries us through the winter. If we don't have any trees, it would've been a real nightmare."

The American Legion in Dover, Massachusetts, also had to search high and low for 450 trees for its annual fundraiser.

"It's getting tough," said Tom McGill, who oversees the effort.

Supply and demand problems are nothing new. Like other crops, Christmas trees are a commodity that goes through cycles from too few trees to



AP Photo/Charles Krupa

Joseph Kang carries a Christmas tree as he restocks the inventory at Noel's tree farm in Litchfield, N.H., in 2011. A tight supply of Christmas trees this season could force consumers to not get the exact tree type they want, but there are enough evergreens to go around.



AP Photo/Toby Talbot

Christmas trees stand in a field at the Pleasant Valley Tree Farm in Bennington, Vt. A tight supply of Christmas trees this season could force consumers to not get the exact tree type they want, but there are enough evergreens to go around.

an oversupply.

But regional factors are also exacerbating the problem.

For example, a spring frost damaged trees at some farms in Canada's Nova Scotia, choking off some sup-

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**Chal Landgren**

Christmas tree specialist and professor at Oregon State University

ply in the Northeast. Some Canadian farms in New Brunswick are buried under snow from recent storms, making it difficult for them to get trees onto trucks for shipment.

A shortage of Fraser trees, the most popular on the East Coast, had some North Carolina buyers scrambling to find balsam firs in New England.

In Oregon, some people are taking Fraser fir trees from the East instead of noble firs that are the most popular tree on the West Coast.

"Supply and demand seem to always be in some flux," Chal Landgren, a Christmas tree specialist and professor at Oregon State University, said via email.

All told, U.S. consumers are

expected to buy about 27 million trees, roughly the same as the last two years, according to the National Christmas Tree Association.

Most people will find what they want, but prices could be a bit higher than last year's average retail price of about \$75, said Tim O'Connor, the association's director.

With the lean supply, shoppers might want to start early if they want a lot of choice and variety.

Spencer Putman, of Weybridge, Vermont, didn't worry himself about a purchase. He simply paid \$5 for a permit to chop down his own tree in the 400,000-acre Green Mountain National Forest. "I don't think we are going to run out of them very soon," he said.

## VOLUNTEERS

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**Clatsop County Animal Shelter** — Animal care volunteers age 16 and older needed for one 3-hour shift per week. Pick up an application at 1315 S.E. 19th St., Warrenton. For information, or to schedule orientation, call Leslie Atkinson at 503-325-1000.

**Columbia Senior Diners** — 1111 Exchange St., Astoria Senior Center. Volunteers needed weekdays to serve tables and for kitchen help. Call 503-325-9693.

**Community Emergency Response Team** — CERT volunteers needed for community events and disaster response with local police, fire and emergency medical service agencies. Training includes fire safety, first aid, traffic and crowd control, communications, damage survey, disaster planning and civic events within city limits. For information, contact CERT coordinator Kenny Hansen at khansen@asto-

ria.or.us or 503-325-4411.

**Friends of Seaside Library** — 1131 Broadway, Seaside. Volunteers needed to staff the fundraising store. For information, call 503-738-6742 or stop by the library.

**Lunch Buddy Mentoring Program** — Adults needed to mentor elementary and middle school students once a week during lunch. For information, call (219) 331-6427 or go to bit.ly/2u3KpWe

**NorthWest Senior & Disability Services** — Needs dishwashers and volunteers to serve and clean up weekdays at a meal site, and drivers for Meals on Wheels. Contact Candy Foster at 503-738-9323.

**Providence Seaside Hospital** — Needs volunteers who enjoy helping people. Opportunities are available in the hospital gift shop, café, and as greeters and for spiritual integration. For information,

call 503-717-7171 or email Alana.Kujala@providence.org

**River Song Foundation** — Looking for people to assist with Trap/Neuter/Release/Feed (TNR), especially in the Seaside and Knapal/Svensen areas. TNR involves setting and/or monitoring traps, and daily feeding of cats and maintenance of any shelters, and is a proven, science-based method that along with spay/neuter programs is the only effective and humane way of ending cat homelessness and suffering. Call 503-861-2003 for information and to volunteer.

**Seaside American Legion Veterans' Assistance & Rehabilitation** — Volunteers needed to help knit/crochet items for hospitalized vets and cut coupons for military families. Donations of fabric/yarn especially welcome. Group meets from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. second Tuesday of the month at 1315 Broadway, Seaside. Call 503-738-5111.




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