

Christmas tree farmers aim to boost sales via social media

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

TUALATIN — Rosa Villarreal's three young sons jumped and ran around the field of Christmas trees like jackrabbits, their excitement palpable as they raced from evergreen to evergreen. The boys, ages 2, 4 and 6, were picking out a real tree this year — a new tradition their young parents hope will create lasting memories.

"I saw this video where the big tree, the mom decorates it, and the little tree, the kids get to decorate it," she said, as her husband, Jason Jimenez, snapped a photo of their toddler posing with a tiny tree just his size.

Christmas tree farmers across the U.S. worry families like Villarreal's are slowly dwindling. Artificial trees, once crude imitations of an evergreen, are now so realistic that it's hard to tell they are fakes even though many are conveniently pre-strung with lights and can fold up for storage at the push of a button.

Between 75 and 80 percent of Americans who have a Christmas tree now have an artificial one, and the \$1 billion market for fake trees is growing at about 4 percent a year — even though they can be reused again and again.

To combat this trend,



In this November 2018 photo, Casey Grogan, owner of Silver Bells Tree Farm and president of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association, trims a noble fir at his 400-acre Christmas tree farm in Silverton. Christmas tree farmers are pushing back against the increasing popularity of artificial trees with a social media advertising campaign called "It's Christmas. Keep It Real!"

Christmas tree farmers have joined forces as the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and are running a social media ad campaign this holiday season to tout the benefits of a real evergreen. The campaign, called "It's Christmas. Keep It Real!," is funded by a 15-cent fee that tree farmers pay for each tree they harvest.

It's a modern-day attempt at such famous agricultural ad campaigns as "Got Milk?" and "Beef. It's What's For Dinner."

A series of short movies on Instagram and Facebook follow real families as they hunt for the perfect tree, cut it down and decorate it. The target audience is the "mil-

Associated Press/Gillian Flaccus



Associated Press/Eric Risberg

In this Friday, Nov. 30, 2018, photo, a man looks at artificial Christmas trees for sale at the Balsam Hill Outlet store in Burlingame, Calif. About 80 percent of Americans who put up a Christmas tree now use a fake one and tree growers worry about those numbers growing as millennials begin to form traditions with their young children.

"The target we're talking about right now is millennials: first house, first baby. That's kind of the decision-making time," she said, adding that the videos show families cutting their own trees and buying pre-cut trees from lots.

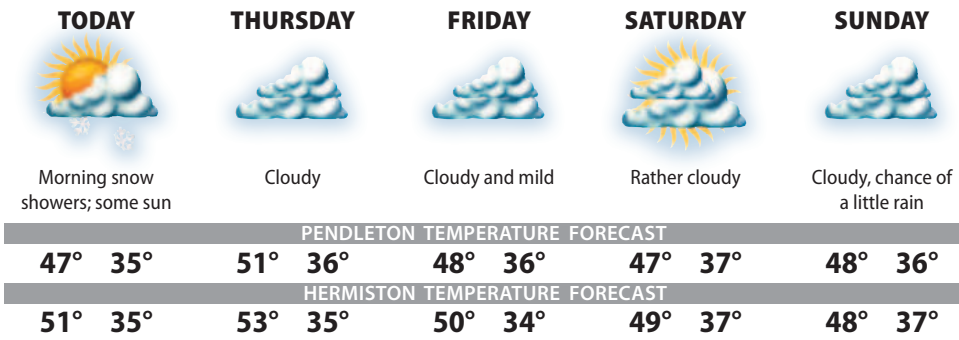
"We realize they may have never done this before. And we need to help them discover it and figure out how to include it in their holiday."

It's impossible to know exactly how many real Christmas trees are sold each year because there is no central clearinghouse or agency collecting that information.

But the National Christmas Tree Association estimates about 25 million evergreens are harvested each year — and presumably, most of those are sold.

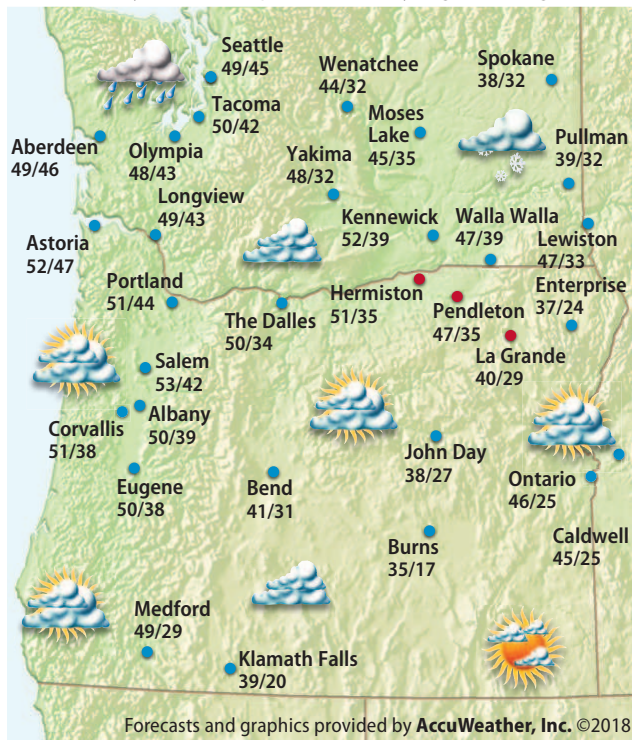
Americans buy about 10 million artificial trees each year, said Thomas "Mac" Harman, CEO of Balsam Hill, the leading retailer of artificial Christmas trees. Harman is also the president of the American Christmas Tree Association, which does not disclose its membership but raised \$70,000 in donations in 2016 for its work, which includes touting artificial trees.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



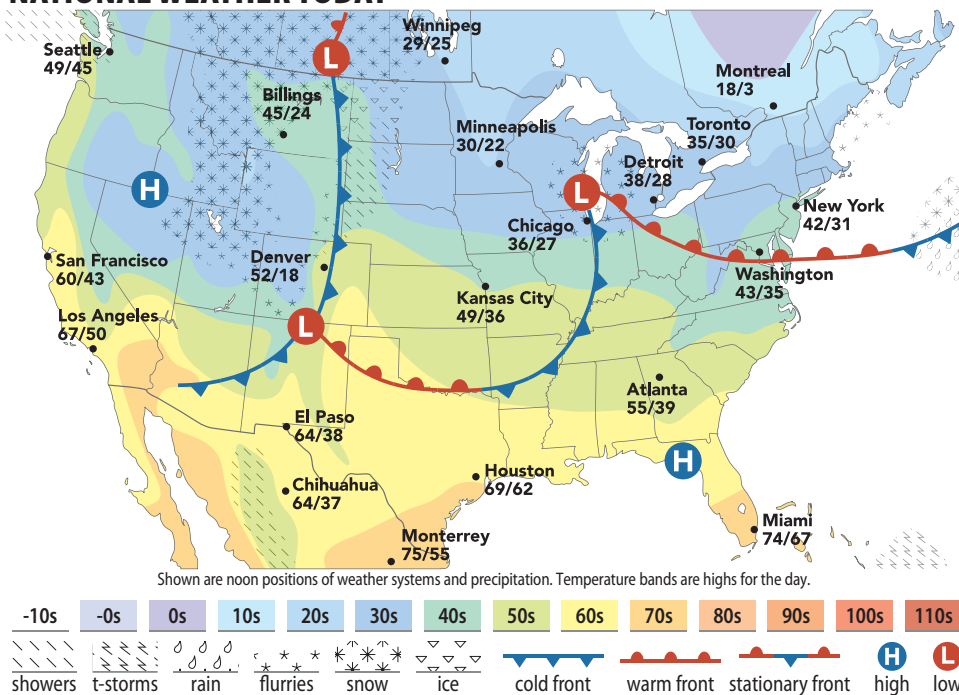
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	48°	31°		
Normals	39°	26°		
Records	67° (1924)	-10° (1932)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.06"			
Month to date	0.15"			
Normal month to date	0.51"			
Year to date	9.02"			
Last year to date	15.33"			
Normal year to date	11.98"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Yesterday	35°	26°		
Normals	40°	28°		
Records	69° (2014)	-14° (1932)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.01"			
Month to date	0.02"			
Normal month to date	0.57"			
Year to date	6.98"			
Last year to date	8.77"			
Normal year to date	9.04"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Thu.		
Boardman	WSW 8-16	SW 4-8		
Pendleton	WSW 10-20	S 7-14		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	7:26 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	4:11 p.m.			
Moonrise today	11:18 a.m.			
Moonset today	9:21 p.m.			
	First	Full	Last	New
	Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29	Jan 5

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 78° in McAllen, Texas Low -17° in Clayton Lake, Maine

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Audit finds Oregon keeps vital opioid information under wraps

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon is collecting valuable information about opioid prescribers and their patients but state law hamstrings using the system to confront drug abuse, state auditors said Tuesday.

Oregon, like all other states, collects information on prescriptions for controlled substances like Oxycodone and Percocet.

But Oregon's program has few teeth, auditors found.

Auditors blamed state lawmakers, saying that constraints they put in place on the program, cre-

ated nearly a decade ago, limit the program's "efficiency, effectiveness and impact."

Misuse or abuse of prescription drugs can lead to abuse of illicit drugs like heroin and fentanyl, the audit report said.

Secretary of State Dennis Richardson Tuesday released results of his audit, focusing on the Oregon Health Authority's use of the prescription system.

His auditors noted that more seniors are hospitalized for opioid abuse, overdoses and dependence in Oregon than in any other state.

Oregon ranks sixth for teen drug use and is the worst in the country for

treatment and recovery support for teens.

While deaths due to prescription opioids have declined 45 percent since a peak in 2006, about one Oregonian dies from an opioid overdose every three days, auditors said. Some research suggests that deaths from prescription opioids are underreported by 20 to 35 percent.

In March, Gov. Kate Brown declared addiction a public health crisis.

In the face of such problems, prescription monitoring could provide Oregon a wealth of information about how opioids are prescribed and dispensed and more tools to prevent abuse.

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Children
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