

Christmas Tree Growing Is Exact Science On Operation At Salem

SALEM—When a better Christmas tree comes along, it is likely that it may come from Drew Michaels' Tree Farm in West Salem.

Just gaze across the rolling green fields of trees—neatly divided by fire breaks—on Michaels' Kingwood Christmas Tree Farm and you will suddenly realize how many different kinds, shades and styles of Christmas trees there are. "There are noble firs, Oregon and Colorado concolor, grand fir, Austrian pines and eastside and westside Douglas firs in here," explains Michaels. "We're working with different species and different growing techniques to develop the best possible kinds of Christmas tree stock."

In several fields, a rich cover of subterranean clover carpets the ground underfoot. Michaels believes the clover's nitrogen-fixing nodules give his trees luxuriant foliage and at the same time hold back spindly top growth by competing with the tree for soil moisture. The ground cover forms a clean, mudless carpet on which customers can walk, is resistant to ground fires and gives the plantations a restful park-like atmosphere. In another field nearby he is trying *alta fescue* as a cover crop.

Michaels also uses the scarring technique — slashing bark from a spot on the tree's stem—to pro-

duce slower, more bushy growth. "Scarring works better on true fir than on Douglas fir — which grows in spite of almost anything you can do to it," Michaels observed. "When we scar a grand fir, we also feed it a good nitrogen fertilizer to produce thicker foliage."

Michaels is using a special fertilizer at the end of the growing season to help his trees "harden off," a term which describes the wintertime thickening of cell sap that makes the tree frost resistant and prevents needles from dropping after it has been harvested.

"I've noticed that after I've used these fertilizers the branches are firmer and have better color," he pointed out.

Tom Cochran, district forester for the Industrial Forestry Association, which sponsors the Tree Farm program in western Oregon and Washington, said Michaels has one of the keenest and most inquiring minds in the Christmas tree business.

"Drew is always planning one jump ahead of himself and two jumps ahead of everybody else," said Cochran.

Drew Michaels and his wife, Darlene, started their Christmas Tree Farm on a five-acre tract in 1949, later added another five-acre hilltop piece on Eola Drive where they live in a neat contemporary-

style house. On a clear day, they can see five snow-clad mountain peaks from their window. Darlene Michaels is an energetic and valuable partner in the hilltop enterprise.

"I've done everything but drive the tractor," she said with an enthusiastic smile.

Michaels says he first became interested in Christmas tree farming back in the depression years when he was doing woods work for the Polk County Fire Patrol.

"There was a noble fir growing along one of the trails I used frequently that was one of the most beautiful trees I had ever seen," he explained. "I brought a few nobles out at Christmastime for friends, and they were wild about them. I decided then that there might be a market for superior trees."

Michaels buys his trees as two-year-old seedlings and sets them out for two years in a transplant bed before moving them to their permanent growing site.

"In this way, most of the mortality we have among the seedlings takes place in the transplant beds instead of out in the field where more ground and labor are at stake," he explained. "In addition, the trees are root-pruned a second

time in the transplant bed and this, plus the act of transplanting, slows down growth enough to give a bushier tree."

He cultivates the trees during their first two years in the field, then seeds a cover crop and keeps it mowed. Under this careful management, he has lost only three per cent of his current crop of noble and grand firs.

After the trees have stood in the field for two or three years, Michaels prunes them to give them proper shape and slow their upward growth still further.

Michaels is currently experimenting with a liquid ammonium sulphate spray to produce greener-than-ordinary needles on his trees just before harvesting them. The trees appear to be responding nicely to this treatment, he noticed.

People have different tastes in their Christmas trees, Michaels observes. Some prefer the dark grandeur of the noble fir with its upright needles, for example, while others are attracted to the long-needled, bluish foliage of the concolor—a white fir which is also prized as a timber species. And there are those, he says, who like the grand fir for its flat, shiny foliage and pungent forest odor.

"If somebody could only capture that odor and put it in a bottle, it would be wonderful to spread around the house at Christmas-time," he laughed.

Michaels who has been a salesman for Sears and Roebuck in Salem for the past 20 years, would like to give his time exclusively to tree farming someday. His methods have won such regard from other growers that his operation was featured in the December issue of *Sunset* magazine.

"He sure grows what I call a 'premeditated' type of tree," Glascock averred.

California Wine Seen In Rising Demand By Expert

SAN FRANCISCO (UPI) — The demand for California wine will rise steadily in 1960, the president of the Wine Institute predicted today.

"Based on preliminary figures, shipments for the first 10 months of 1959 — the 25th vintage since repeal — amounted to 102,372,271 gallons," said Don W. McColly in a year-end statement.

McColly also based his 1960 prediction on the knowledge that the 1959 vintage had achieved a quality even higher than usual.

Shipments from January to November totaled more than a half-billion bottles.

"The 10-month total was nearly a million gallons higher than at the same point in 1957, the record sales year to date," said McColly.

"Final figures are not yet available but we expect our 1959 vintage to total within a few percentage points of last year's 146 million gallons — sufficient to meet both the demands of an expanding market and replenish inventories of aging wines."

In 1957 wine shipments totaled 124,307,000 gallons, almost five times the California industry's sales in 1934 when the institute was established here as a trade association for what is now a more than 600 million dollar agricultural industry.

McColly pointed to the institute's decision to study the medicinal benefits of wine as among the year's most important achievements.

He said newly confirmed uses of wine lie in treatment of nutritional deficiencies, for speeding recovery of patients from wasting illnesses, and serious surgical procedures. It is also believed to be an aid in preventing alcoholic excesses or alcoholism, he added.

An exceptionally high increase in the sale of sparkling wines was noted during 1959. Sales were more than a million gallons, 60 per cent over the 1954-58 average.

McColly said an even larger number of Americans might have enjoyed sparkling wines except for the "extremely high \$3.40 per gallon federal excise tax, which actually is a tax on bubbles and is 20 times the value of grapes

to the grower."

Table wines gained more than 13 per cent during the 10-month period, totaling more than 25 million gallons. The report said desert wines totaled 76 million gallons to remain at an even level.

Four-fifths of all wines produced and consumed in America come from California, the Wine Institute reported. During 1958 the U. S. consumers bought a total of 154,500,000 gallons of American and foreign wines. Adult per capita consumption was 1.45 gallons.

Sheep Scabies Scare Tapers

Sheep scabies has been diagnosed at Longmont, Colorado, according to notification to the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

While the outbreak is minor and all exposed animals, cattle included, have been treated, the manner in which it came to Colorado should serve as a warning to Oregon livestock men, Oregon officials assert.

The disease was introduced in Colorado by the illegal movement of seven ewes from Pennsylvania, where sheep scabies is a problem in several areas. The Pennsylvania animals were moved from a scabies area without a permit and without prior dipping and treatment.

Issuance of a permit by the state of destination enables veterinarians to check and supervise treatment of exposed animals upon arrival. As result of disregard of this health precaution, all Colorado sheep now moving into other states will have to be dipped and be moved under a permit.

Oregon sheep raisers, says Dr. M. R. Woulfe of the department veterinary staff, are familiar with the extent of scabies in the east and Midwest. Compliance with important requirements, he added, will keep Oregon clear of this menace.

Animal with the largest eyes is the great H. whale, which has an eyeball about five inches in diameter.



DISCUSSING CHRISTMAS TREE MANAGEMENT with forester Hardy Glascock, left, is Drew Michaels, Salem tree farmer. In the background is a part of Michaels' tree plantations. — AFPI Photo



A YOUNG TREE that has been trimmed and shaped is examined on the Kingwood Christmas Tree Farm near Salem by tree farmer Drew Michaels, left, and forester Hardy Glascock. Michaels scarred stem of this tree to produce slower, more bushy growth. — AFPI Photo

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