

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS



*Airport Christmas Tree Plantation*

## **O Christmas Tree – Ramblings**

*For family fun, you cannot beat the annual visit to a tree farm to choose and cut a Christmas tree.*

By J. Morton Galetto, CU Maurice River

Some of my fondest holiday memories involve the Christmas tree; the Christmas tree. For many years we have put the tree up about two weekends before Christmas. I invite my sister's family over to have supper and help decorate. My niece - and her husband have two children, three and nine years old, and it makes for a fun evening. Her husband's 6"3" height really comes in handy when decorating the tree. I suspect that many tall men end up having to suffer from the whims of shorter people's placement preferences.

I love the way the youngest children always hang decorations at eye level and place multiple items on the same twig. Over time most of these get redistributed - or at least attached to a branch. I admit when I sit down after a full day's work and look over at the tree to see three ornaments sharing the same spot it makes me smile, because I know how it happened.

The decorating process requires that we turn on favorite Christmas songs. When I was a child this meant continually changing vinyl discs. Everyone had a favorite album, so it could get sort of chaotic.

Today we employ the services of an Echo and a bit of banter ensues as folks holler, "Alexa, play Silent Night," and someone counters with, "No, Alexa, Jingle Bells!"

We go to a Christmas tree farm each year to select and cut a live evergreen for the house. When our daughter was five years old she chose the smallest of trees, about six inches to a foot tall. She sat on the ground, picked up various bits of forest mast, and began decorating it at the farm. A few years ago I witnessed my niece's daughter in a photo doing the same thing.



This year while hunting for just the right tree I heard a parent say, "So that's the one you want? It seems to be a tad too small." I turned to see a toddler pointing to a tree saying, "This one, Daddy." And it occurred to me that maybe we make selecting an evergreen far more complicated than would be necessary if we just listened to our children's wishes.

As preschoolers our daughters liked playing with the large boxes more than the presents they held. Many children would be happy with a tree that resembles the one in "*A Charlie Brown Christmas*:" little more than a stick, with a few ornaments, and a big empty box plus a set of markers!



*Lee Mendelson Productions*

*Apple purchased the right to A Charlie Brown Christmas, and this year it will be streamed on AppleTV+/ Animation: Lee Mendelson Productions.*

If you are a Peanuts fan like me you might find it interesting that in 1965 CBS executives were reluctant to air the "*Charlie Brown Christmas*," special. They thought it would interfere with habitual evening programming and they had no experience with half-hour prime time animation. The tv special used actual children's voice for the animated characters, which was also an innovation. Now, 58 years later, it is a holiday tradition airing yearly in many homes.

If you are still debating whether to use a live or artificial tree, from an environmental stand point live is better. Local tree farms help maintain more open space and live

trees take carbon dioxide out of the air. And for every tree cut, most farmers grow three more.

On the flip side, the manufacture of artificial trees pollutes the air, and they take 500 years to biodegrade. So if you already have an artificial tree don't throw it away; add it to the codicil of your will with the stipulation that it be used by your heirs for the next 400+ years!

Some farmers further enhance their farms for wildlife. The Airport Tree Plantation in Millville maintains a bluebird trail offering many houses for these lovely passerines.

Things to keep in mind when preparing to head out on your search: Check the weather and dress properly. Every year I see folks with inappropriate footwear or garbed too lightly for the occasion. Think about what might be needed. Depending on where you go a saw, a kneeling pad, garden gloves, a big wheeled stroller, or possibly a wagon to pull young children may be in order. You may also need straps or rope to secure the tree to your vehicle.

Before leaving the house, know the circumference your tree stand will hold. When selecting a tree make sure its trunk will fit in your stand.

This year we took an electric chain saw and found ourselves cutting down a number of other families' trees. If you think out your needs ahead of time it should be an enjoyable experience.

For a number of years we have been going to the Airport Tree Plantation in Millville. In addition to trees they sell grave blankets and wreaths. Besides liking the owner and staff, by far my all-time favorite thing at their farm is the tree shaker. If you haven't seen one it's the bomb. I don't know if other tree farms have one, but after we saw theirs we never went anywhere else. I do a little rocking around the Christmas tree to their shaking out of the dead needles and duff.





*Exuding lots of Christmas spirit, Leslie Hurley of the Airport Christmas tree Plantation makes up wreaths and grave blankets. Photo: J. Morton Galetto.*



*When asked what she likes best about the tree farm, Leslie said the bluebirds and the open space that the farm provides for them.  
CU File Photo.*

This information may help some procrastinators, or inform you about what to do next year for a Christmas tree. More than anything I hope it has triggered some happy memories and that your holidays are merry.

**Source**

Frank Lowenstein, Director of Climate adaptation for The Nature Conservancy, Video: *Christmas Tree Debate: Real vs. Fake.*

*Please scroll for more fun facts.*





### **Water, Water, Water**

*The most important advice for live tree users is to water your tree each day and take it out of the house before it stops taking up water or shortly thereafter.*

*Photo: Longwood Gardens, J. Morton Galetto*

### **Looking for Christmas tree farms near you?**

*Christmastreefarms.net* maintains a list of tree farms. Simply plug in your zip code and your species preference, then select from the firs, spruces, or pines and you should see some farms within driving distance of your home.



## **ROCKIN' OUT WITH THE CHRISTMAS TREE SHAKER**

What's with the 50's Hip Hop glasses? CU Maurice River is holding its zany Annual Holiday Match to match \$30K toward its environmental mission. This year the theme is "Wearing Hot Pink: - glasses that is. To help out with the match go to

***cumauriceriver.org and select JOIN/RENEW/DONATE.*** We hope you will participate.