

Nothing like a freshly cut CHRISTMAS TREE

By Justin Sanchez

THE HOLIDAY SEASON wouldn't feel complete without a fresh Christmas tree fully decked out with ornaments in the house. Fortunately, there are a few local tree farms hoping to help people find a good one.

Almost everyone who actually goes out to a cut-and-choose tree farm knows what kind of a tree they want, from the height to the width, and it's up to tree farmers to fulfill those requirements.

THANKS TO A WET SEASON, K & K Evergreen Farm's owner Don Kachtik said they should have the right tree for everyone.

"Everybody has a different idea of what a good looking tree is and it's never the same," Kachtik said. "I've learned to never question someone's tree they picked out."

K&K Evergreen farms owner Don Kichtik shapes his trees for the holiday season.

Although it may be impossible to find the perfect tree, many aim to find the closest thing to it. Some spend two to three hours at a Christmas tree farm, Kachtik said.

RAISING THE RIGHT TREES for opening day, which began on the first weekend of November, takes a lot of hard work for the farmers.

Trees have to be planted and raised until they are at least 4-years-old before they are sold, he said. Throughout that period of time they require a lot of TLC, with everything from trimming and grooming, to spraying the trees clear of bugs.

"It's very time consuming," Spell's Golden Triangle Tree owner V.G. Spell said. "You have to shear the trees twice a year, in May and in August, and you have to spray them for insects."

The end result, however, is a tree that can't be replicated by something sold artificially on store shelves.

"The tree is fresh cut while you wait for it," Spell said.

On opening day, customers go out to the tree farm of their preference and tag a tree with a small deposit to ensure they get the tree they really want.

AS CHRISTMAS APPROACHES, customers can pick up their selected tree. Many of them return the day after Thanksgiving, Kachtik said.

Picking out a planted tree isn't the only thing special about going to an actual tree farm, he said.

Spell's offers hay rides, hot chocolate, and animals to pet. Both tree farms, located outside of Orange, offer tours to those who book them in advance.

"We have hot chocolate and popcorn for everyone. A lot of people come and spend two to three hours out here," Spell said. "It's all a part of the deal."

Many long time customers seem to agree, as they keep coming year after year.

"We have people that have been buying trees from us for 30 years, and we have 3rd generations of their family coming here," Kachtik said. "They like coming out to the country and choosing a tree and the kids love it."

Anyone wanting a freshly chopped tree needs to tag theirs early though, because the best ones never last long.

"Around 75 or so trees are tagged in the first weekend," he said, "so a lot of the good trees are gone early."

THERE ARE STILL SOME LEFT for those coming late to the party, however. Spell said they often get visitors just days before Christmas, and always have some trees left over.

With numerous tree farms visit throughout Southeast Texas, why settle for a parking lot tree when you can get the real deal?

