

Christmas Trees

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popular tree variety, Frey said, "We sell more Scotch pine than anything else, but I think we're going to get out of Scotch pines. They take more work than any other tree. Scotch pines mature in about eight years. They grow faster, which means they have to be sheared more often. And the price we get for a Scotch pine is usually less than we get for a Douglas fir or a blue spruce.

"Another bad thing about Scotch pine, at least from the grower's viewpoint, is that out of a hundred seedlings, we'll only get 75 saleable trees. Some of the other varieties will yield almost 100 percent. Scotch pines might give a new grower a quicker return for his money, but in the long run I don't think it's the best tree to grow."

In addition to Scotch pine, the Freys have Douglas fir, white

pine, Austrian Pine, blue spruce and white spruce.

One uncommon variety Frey is experimenting with could be called a super tree, but its real name is the Frazer fir. It's a soft needle tree, it doesn't shed and it retains its freshness for two or three months.

Growing trees in Lancaster County is a little different from growing in the northern part of the state. "Good farmland is good for trees, too," Frey says. "In the northern counties, a single grower might have hundreds of acres planted to trees, but the land is usually worthless for anything else. We grow nicer trees on our place, but we've got to shear them more often."

The Freys don't fertilize their trees. They do spray the ground with Simazine every spring, though, to control weeds. Too many weeds can choke out seedlings in a hurry. They have some problems with diseases, bugs and birds, but these attack mostly young trees. When a crisis occurs, the Freys are quick to call on the experts at the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association, of which they are members.

Rabbits are one of Frey's biggest headaches. "They don't

Lancaster County's largest Christmas tree farm is located just outside Willow Street. For the past twelve years, Ralph Frey and his family have carefully nurtured their 34 acres of evergreens. Trimming,

spraying, planting and sound management have resulted in a profitable farm enterprise which is just little out-of-the-ordinary for this area.

hurt the larger trees, but when snow is on the ground, rabbits can just about wipe out a stand of

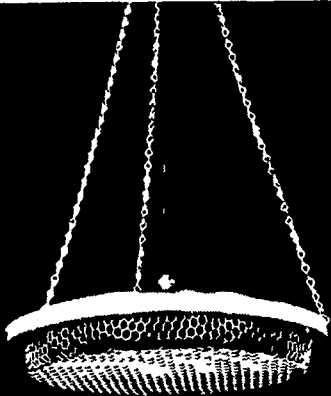
seedlings. They hop along the rows, bite off the tops of the trees and suck out the sap. And the

trees just can't recover from that kind of treatment."



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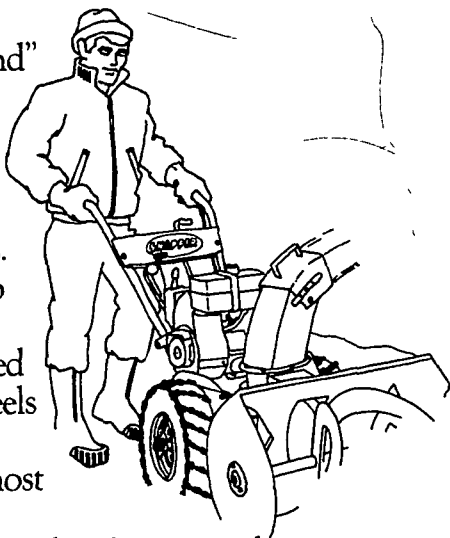
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