

## Population Trends Affect Tree Sales

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — For nearly 15 years, the sale of real Christmas trees has increased only slightly due in part to an aging population and the increase in non-traditional families, according to a Penn State forestry expert.

"Demographics are keeping

tree sales relatively flat," said James Finley, an instructor in forest resources.

According to the National Christmas Tree Grower's Association, the number of evergreens expected to be purchased across the country in 1991 is just over 36 million. In the last decade, the

number of trees sold has increased by only about 12 percent.

Finley began comparing the consumption of Christmas trees in his home state of Pennsylvania in 1985 with baseline data obtained from 1962. In that study, Finley noted that in 1962, 1.6 million Christmas trees were purchased in the state. In 1985, the figure hovered around 1.5 million trees.

Today, nearly 30 years later, sales in the commonwealth still remain at that level.

"Only about one in three households in the United States uses a real tree during the holiday season. One-third will have an artificial tree and another one-third will not celebrate with a tree."

Finley attributes the limited growth in real tree usage to an aging population that has opted to avoid the inconveniences that sometimes accompany installing and disposing of a real tree. The forestry expert also said the surge in single-parent households has contributed to the slow-growth trend.

"A real tree requires the investment of time and effort which may not be realistic for some families,"

he said. "It is unfortunate because real trees are a beautiful and traditional part of a Christmas celebration."

"Since Christmas trees can be a focal point of the celebration and are an important industry in many states, we encourage people to be innovative in the use of trees."

Finley suggested purchasing and erecting a real tree for an elderly family member or neighbor, buying a smaller table top tree, or placing a tree in more than one room of the house.

The popularity of select species of Yuletide conifers has waxed and waned according to the whims

of consumers who look for fullness, near-perfect shape, and good needle retention.

The most popular Christmas tree sold in America today is Scotch pine, followed by Douglas fir, Frazier fir, Colorado blue spruce and white pine in that order.

"The original Christmas tree was a Balsam fir, but consumers want variety and they are demanding a higher quality tree than ever before," he said. "For needle retention, the best bet is still true firs, then pines. Nothing matches the fragrance, color and magic of a real tree."

## 4-H Leaders View Strip Mine Reclamation Project



Chris Wolbert of Youngsville (right) and David Miller of Warren (center), recently attended a National, Natural Resources 4-H Leaders Forum in Weston, West Virginia. Miller was also an instructor on wildlife habitat improvement at the forum. According to Sanford Smith, Warren County Extension Agent, (left) "the many issues surrounding the wise use of our natural resources require citizens with a sound scientific understanding of natural resource management. 4-H is preparing leaders and future leaders in these fields!" Smith was on the planning committee of the forum and also served as a presenter. The group is shown looking over a strip mine land reclamation project. The forum was funded by Waste Management Inc. and The National 4-H Council in Washington D.C.



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