

Relive The Experience Of Cutting Your Own Tree At Christmastime

(Continued from Page A1)

body. Wagon rides try to explain what's going on at the farm. And everything we use on the rides we use daily on the farm."

He said that the farm doesn't use herbicides and pesticides on the trees. With help from Cammauf brothers Brent and Justin, the trees are cut and replaced by seedlings in the spring. Mowing is in both directions.

Shearing is done by Doug and Lynn from mid-June through September to give the trees that dense, tight shape that consumers prefer.

Lately, however, the Potts have been selling a tree that has not been sheared and shows one year's worth of natural growth. Many prefer the look that nature provides, untouched by shears.

Doug said the experience of picking a tree "is as close to being able to go out in the woods and just select your tree," like families did in the old days.

Six years ago when they started selling choose and cut trees, the Potts have marketed their farm for people who "want to come and experience the afternoon."

Of the 20 acres owned by the

Potts, 13 are devoted to Christmas trees. When they purchased the farm in 1989, the Potts wanted to settle down, have a few horses and sell some trees to landscaping firms.

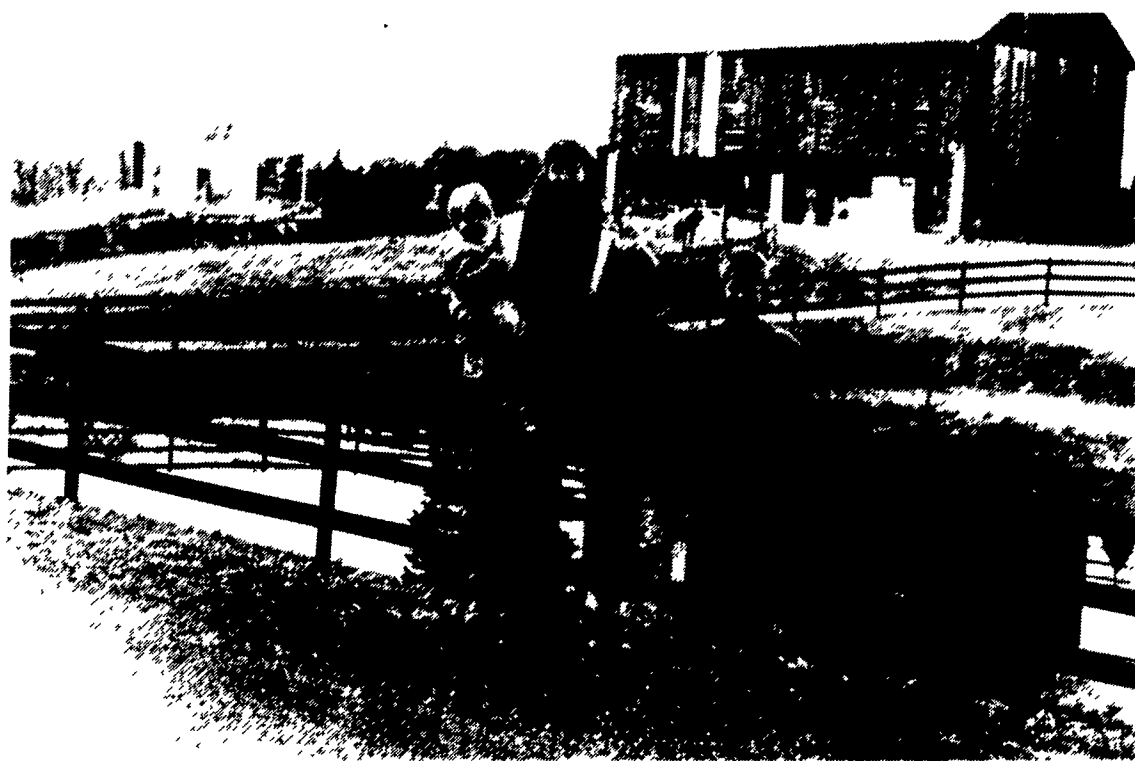
Along the way, they changed their minds.

"When we purchased the farm, we primarily bought it not to go into the Christmas tree business," he said. "We bought it as a residence. And we really didn't know what we were going to do with the trees."

Some of the trees were planted by the previous owner, who sold the trees to landscape firms. The Potts still sell trees to landscape operations.

Instead, they decided to sell the trees during Christmastime, available in heights ranging from one to 14 feet. Fir trees grown include Douglas, Fraser, Canaan, and Concolor. They also grow Colorado Blue Spruce. Pine trees are the White, Austrian, and Hemlock.

On the weekends, the barn is open for free hot chocolate and coffee. Every child gets a coloring book and candy cane. The wagon rides through the fields are sche-



"Most people love the experience of cutting the tree," said Doug Potts, who helps part-time with the operation. That experience "is what's going to bring the families that buy trees from us back year after year." From left, Jenna, 21 months, Lynn, Devin, Wesley, and their dog, Sarge.

duled on the weekends.

"Most people love the experience of cutting the tree," said Doug Potts, who helps part-time with the operation. That experience "is what's going to bring back the families that buy trees from us year after year."

Doug has a full-time job as general sales manager for the Tom Masano car dealership in Reading.

Lynn believes people are often surprised by all the work involved in growing a tree.

"A lot of people think you plant a tree and watch it grow for 7-10 years, and that's so untrue," she said.

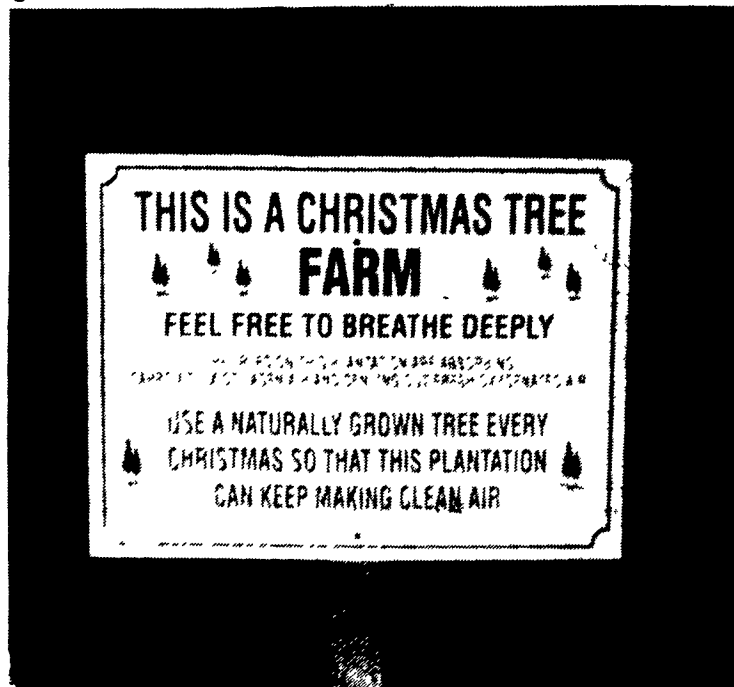
Doug said, "They think you put it in the ground for 45 cents apiece and just come back seven to 10 years later and you're instantly wealthy."

That's not the case because, as Lynn said, taking care of Christmas trees until they are cut and purchased is "very labor-intensive."

Often they answer the customer question about whether it is right to go out and cut trees. Lynn reassures them that it's "not like we're going out in a forest and leveling it and building buildings." Cut trees are replaced.

And the chores can get pretty exhausting. "As hot and dry as it was in August, we were mowing," she said. The weeds seem to prefer hot and dry weather and pose a constant challenge.

The Potts have received a lot of comments from customers about



The philosophy of the 20-acre North Wind Farm is simple: allow people to experience what Christmas is and how Christmas trees are grown. Don't just push them through a parking lot with a number with no sense of how the trees got there.

the farm. They prefer to keep the operation the way it is, not adding a lot of "commercialism" so prevalent on choose and cut operations.

"Bigger and more doesn't always necessarily mean better," said Doug. He said that the overall Christmas tree industry is overproducing and many people are experiencing stagnant sales.

For the Potts, this is their sixth selling season and each year their sales are doubling. Doug sales they

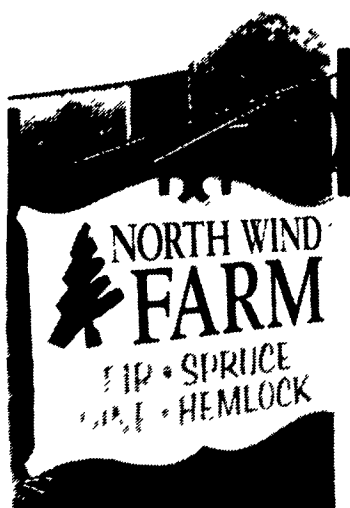
sell between 600-1,000 Christmas trees every year.

People come from all over to visit the farm. That includes visitors from New Jersey and from nearby in Mohnnton, Centerport, and all over Berks County.

Last year, Lynn said people came with their umbrellas, despite a rainy weekend.

Doug said that one time, a customer came at dusk and used the

(Turn to Page A33)



On the weekends, the barn is open for free hot chocolate and coffee. Every child gets a coloring book and candy cane. The wagon rides through the fields are scheduled on the weekends. Lynn stands here with Jenna, 21 months.



Shearing is done by Doug and Lynn from mid-June through September to give the trees that dense, tight shape that consumers prefer. Here, Devin helps work the tree drill.



At North Wind Farm, Justin Cammauf, left and brother Brent cut a Douglas Fir for a customer.