

**On Being a Farm Wife**  
(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



hide an uneven or less-full side After setting it in a tree stand — and our debates about the best side — Dad would string on the lights (which were inevitably somewhat tangled and need a bulb replaced) and leave the rest to Mom and us kids

And they always became beautiful trees

In the early years of our marriage, The Farmer hauled home the tree, first from a neighbor who sold them, later cut from our own small planting of pines in a corner of the farm inaccessible for field cropping As they grew, our kids became the tree selectors, picking out a "weed" cedar each December from those that grew in other small, untillable corners and banks on the farm

Some were too big, some too little, some had "holes" in their appearance One year, we actually fastened in a branch into a tree to fill a gap There were some trees as wide as they were tall, including one year's dubbed the "Christmas bush" But all accepted our humble strings of lights, homemade decorations, and the inevitable collection of assorted, and prized, cow ornaments.

And, in the end, they were all beautiful Christmas trees

With the kids grown and our lives hectic with cows and crops, I actually debated a few years ago doing what I had once considered an act of holiday treason buying an artificial tree

Instead, when a local discount store advertised a sale of potted, Norfolk Island pines, I picked out the nicest, 30-inch one I could find and plunked down a few bucks for a "real" Christmas tree While small, it was still pretty with red bows and a few of the favorites from our cow ornament collection

"Boy, has that tree grown," observed The Farmer as he edged around our homegrown Christmas tree last week It no longer fits in its prior location; I had to move the rocking chair out of the living room to make a space for it

The potted pine stands nearly six feet tall and about four

feet at its widest branching, having shot up and out the last two years like a teenaged boy hitting puberty The only special care it gets, is an occasional move to a larger container and periodic feedings of pure all-organic, diluted manure "tea" It summers on the basement porch, winters in the greenhouse and now has adequate branches for the cow ornaments, plus lots of others A string of tiny, white lights added last year only covers half the tree's height this year

It's not a shapely Frasier fir, or a classic Scotch pine or a fragrant, long-needled white pine, but, like all Christmas trees, it's special in its own way

Christmas trees are symbols of the love of the season That makes them all beautiful Enjoy yours

To you and yours, from The Farmer and I, a blessed, peaceful and safe holiday season



"O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, How lovely are your branches

"O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, You seem to have run rampant"

(With apologies to the composer of the old holiday classic)

Our tree went up in good time this year Once I rearranged the house.

Christmas isn't Christmas for me without a tree It was so when I was a little kid and is still so now as a considerably older "kid."

With Christmas on the horizon, we would begin pestering Daddy to bring home a tree. And, one evening as the big hol-

iday was about a week away, usually within a week or so, a Scotch pine would come lumbering through the door, with Daddy prope"ing its direction from somewhere among the branches. Immediately the holiday perfume of fresh pine filled the living room.

For us, the Christmas season had officially begun

Sometimes the pine went right back out for a meeting with the saw and a lopping off of some length of trunk This was necessary to assure the tree would stand upright without developing a permanent creak in its tip Sometimes we had to jockey the tree around a bit to

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