

'Five Crazy Weeks' Comprise Christmas Tree Farmers' Time, Energy

(Continued from Page A1)

clay, he said, because the trees can't stand "wet feet"), and want a lot of moisture. "The drought had the biggest effect," Koch said, on survivability. During the drought, which lasted from May 1998 until Hurricane Floyd in September this year, the Frasers and the Hemlock trees did the poorest.

Koch's father purchased the farm, about 102 acres initially, in 1945. The first trees were planted at the farm in 1947.

In those days, cabbage and tomatoes were grown. It wasn't long after, until the mid-1950s, that the whole farm became entirely Christmas trees.

Through the years, small surrounding farms were purchased, about five in all. Now the Koch family, including Buddy's brother Gary, owns about 500 acres and leases another 100 acres or so.

About 300 acres on the farm are in Christmas trees.

Mostly, the Kochs grow Fraser and Douglas firs. But they also grow Blue Spruce, White Pine, Norway Spruce, Hemlock, and Serbian Spruce.

In late November, about 15 full-time employees were busy cutting, spraying, wrapping, and loading trees to delivery to retail outlets and nurseries. About 10 wagons per day are loaded each with about 150-180 trees.

Sprays are used to code for tree height. Koch uses blue for 6-7 foot

high trees, red for 8-9 foot, green for 9-10 foot, and blue again for 10-12 foot. Orange sprays are placed on the tree "butt," said Koch, for special, premium, large trees, from 10-12 feet in height. Purple paint marks trees more than 12 feet tall.

Indiana County has been known as the Christmas tree capitol of the world, Koch noted. But Schuylkill County offers good competition.

A key is obtaining good, quality seedlings, Koch said. That was something he learned from his

father. They purchase seedlings from Berkey's, Strathmyers in York, Carino's from Indiana County, and Abraczinskas in Bloomsburg.

Most seedlings are "two-tvos," Koch noted, meaning they spend two years in a seedbed and two years in a transplant bed. The quality Frasers are "three-tvos," meaning they spend three years in a seedling bed before they are moved to the transplant bed.

Customers for the trees include Kuss Brothers, Allentown; Big John's, Atlanta, Ga.; Walt Whitcraft, Cherry Hill, N.J.; Kuperus Farmside Gardens, Sussex, N.J.; and Rhoades Garden, North Wales.

For quality trees, Koch noted that the farm uses a preemergent herbicide in the spring, Roundup in the fall, and fertilizer is used in the fall. The trees are sheared once per year.

The two biggest keys, Koch said, are "shearing and herbicides to keep the weed competition down."

Koch pointed to woods cleared about 20 years ago that will have a first cutting. The trees were planted in 1991.

Thanksgiving week is the biggest week of the year, he said. "Everybody wants their trees," he said. The Koch family starts cutting Nov. 8 and cuts until about Dec. 12. That comprises the "five crazy weeks" for the holiday Christmas tree selling season, Koch noted.

For shipping, the business uses a bank barn. One side the trees are loaded from hay wagons and are dropped out the other side onto waiting trucks. This minimizes handling, saves labor, and also reduces amount of manpower needed.



Bud Koch looks over the farm's bank-barn distribution center from atop a field.



The week of Thanksgiving, the Koch farm was baling Christmas trees. From left, Hugh Daullary, Bruno Calai, Jerry Lawell, Bill Hartranft, and Roger Freed.

Tobacco Auction Dec. 20

NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — The first tobacco auction of the season is scheduled Monday, Dec. 20, at 10 a.m. here at the Orton Industrial Park, in a new building on Jalyn Drive.

The auction was rescheduled from its original date of Wednesday, Dec. 15, because the building construction wasn't finished.

Dennis Hess is manager. Contact him at (717) 355-5336.

LEBANON VALLEY ENTERPRISES, INC.

Manufacturing • Powder Coating • Precast

- X Adjustable neck opening for calf to cow
- X Auto Release for downed cows
- X Baked on high gloss, high impact and acid resistant TGIC polyester powder coating
- X No springs to rust or wear over time
- X High Quality
- X 1 9" OD top and bottom rail 1" sch 40 uprights
- X Affordable Prices
- X 20 year rust thru guarantee



HEAD LOCK

P.O. Box 187, Myerstown, PA 17067 • (717) 866-2030

Call us for your nearest Dealer!

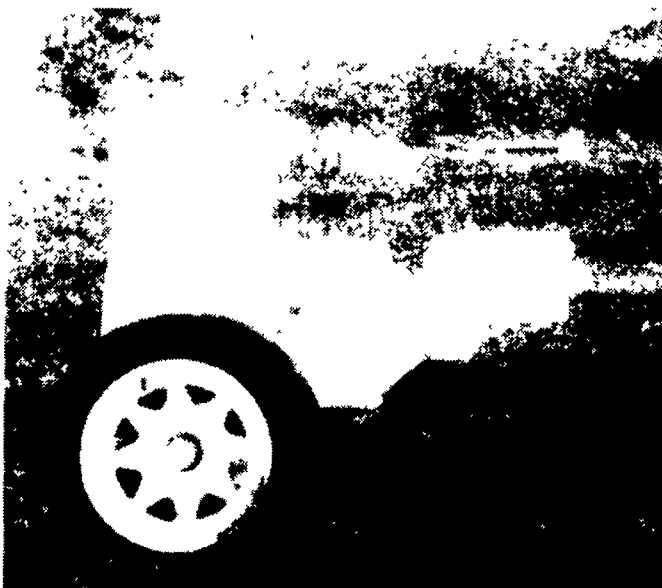
GenPower

Dependable, Brushless Stand-By Power

GenPower gives you superior quality at the best price

- Brushless** - Brush free design reduces maintenance requirements
- Slow Speed** - 1800 RPM, Slower speeds result in reduced wear for all moving parts
- Longer Life** - Heavy duty bearings are rated for 30,000 hours of maintenance free life.
- All Copper Wire** - All copper wire is used throughout the windings of all GenPower generators

- Solid State Voltage Regulation
- 3 Year Limited Warranty
- PTO Safety Shield
- Large Color Coded Gauge



- Greater Motor Starting Ability
- Dependable Gear Drive
- Full Output Plug
- Main Line Breaker

Electric Motors Inc.

125 Falling Spring Rd.
Chambersburg, PA 17201
717-263-1919

S & S