

Cutting your own Christmas tree is real family experience

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EMC Lifestyle – The Christmas tree is the centerpiece of celebrations in most households.

Children gather under the branches shaking gifts, or cats climb through the limbs. Then there are the needles and the smell of a fresh cut tree.

There's just something about the smell of an evergreen when you walk into a house that makes it feel more Christmasy.

According to the Ontario Farm Grown Christmas Trees website (www.christmastrees.on.ca) evergreens have been associated with seasonal celebrations during the winter solstice since ancient times. The first recorded use of an evergreen as a Christmas tree in Canada was in Sorel, Quebec in 1781 and the next recorded use was in Halifax in 1846. As the tradition spread, so did the hunt for the perfect tree.

The tradition continues at Fallowfield Tree Farm, owned by Ken Stuyt. He took over the operation three years ago after the previous owner passed away. It's been a staple, for those who want to cut their own tree for almost 20 years.

When you come to the tree farm, Stuyt explained, it's the whole experience that captivates visitors.

"It's more getting back to the family tradition of going out to the field with the wagon ride and cutting your own tree," said Stuyt. "You have Santa and the bonfire, free hot chocolate and it's just a whole event. That's what people enjoy doing, opposed to going to a local side store."

He'll sell approximately 1,000 trees in December and believes his business has increased in the last few years because of the unique experience.

"They (customers) are in the hustle and bustle of things, and they're just tired of it so they just want to take two or three hours with their family and come on the weekend."

On the weekend Santa Claus normally pays a visit, there's a hay wagon or sleigh depending on the snow conditions, and more.

However, even on a sunny Wednesday afternoon, there are families out looking for their tree – including Jo Ann and Dave Bennett from Hintonburg – who were specifically looking for a balsam tree. They called around and this was the only tree farm in the area that had balsam, so their adventure started.

Jo Ann wanted to cut her own because that's how she knows it'll be really fresh – and it smells good.

"If I buy one in town, the needles fall off and you're still vacuuming in August," Jo Ann commented as she waited for the wagon ride to start.

Dave added it was a marvelous idea to go out and cut one's own tree and it helps keep tradition alive.

"It brings you closer to nature and feels more like Christmas," said Dave as the bumpy ride started.

The two were well-dressed for their adventure out in the 100-acre forest, which features more than 5,000 trees including Fraser Fir, Balsam Fir, Spruce and pine.

"There's a good variety for people to choose from when they go and walk in the back," said Stuyt.

Jo Ann thought part of the fun of the experience was walking around trying to decide which tree was the best one.



Ken Stuyt, owner of Fallowfield Tree Farm, left, is all smiles as Kyla and Damien Dunn cut their tree

You can see how they grow (but if they're bundled up you can't see how they fall) and then you get to say this one is nice, no this one is better or this one, it's taller or fuller."

By the end of the afternoon, they'd found just the right one to decorate at home and secured it to the top of their car.

Damien Dunn and his six-year old daughter Kyla made the trip from Mooney's Bay to the farm after they picked a winner last year.

"I like having a fresh tree, it looks better," said Damien.

For the pair, it was a chance to build some father-daughter memories, but Damien noted that the real decision maker, his wife was unable to come on the trip. Stuyt reasoned with him that if it didn't get her approval, he could come back for another – he really tries to work with his customers.

Damien explained that the shape and size were key factors when making his decision. He was instantly attracted to a tree, but then kept looking.

"What about this one?" he asked his daughter. "Daddy, I don't like this one, it's too fat," she replied.

"If it's fat you can put more ornaments on it."

The search continued.

The whole experience will cost you \$50 to \$60, which also includes having the tree shaken in a special shaker, wrapped and placed on top of your car or truck.

If you still want that fresh cut tree, you can purchase one which has been cut within 10 days for \$30 to \$50. Stuyt calls these his number one trees because they're full all the way around and trimmed to go. You can even call to have one delivered for a little extra.

Ontario Farm Grown Christmas Trees explains that the Christmas tree is a symbol of renewed life and is a symbol of joy and delight to all.

For Kyla, the joy was that her dad ended up picking the first tree he set his eyes on and they were off for the warm trip home.

The Fallowfield Tree Farm is located at 6100 Fallowfield Road.

Exit Highway 416 at the Fallowfield Road exit, go 8 kilometers west.

The farm is just past Eagleson Road... watch for their signs.

They're open until December 24 from 9 am to 6 pm

For more information call **613.720.3451**

or visit www.FallowfieldTreeFarm.com

