



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Marion County

Searching for the Perfect Christmas Tree

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The author examining a very nice Nordmann fir tree at OSU NWREC

Already found your perfect Christmas tree this holiday season?

Well, it's a lot easier to find a great yule tree in our part of the state than anywhere else in the nation. That's because Oregon is the leading producer of Christmas trees in the U.S. and has been for more than 40 years—and, we also produce the best trees!

Thanks to the efforts of western Oregon farmers and forest owners (including many right here in Marion County) beginning back in the 1950s—and working side-by-side with OSU Extension agents and campus faculty—this industry was created. Today, Marion County is the number #2 producer of Christmas trees in the state and right behind Clackamas County. Together, these two counties put a Christmas tree in about 1 of every 10 homes across the United States every year. That's an amazing statistic and an industry with a huge economic impact for us locally.

But no industry can rest on its laurels. We always need to be moving forward, pushing the envelope to stay on the cutting edge of technology. As Oregon's only Extension faculty member with responsibility working with the Christmas tree growers in the state my work with local tree farmers is focused on finding that next perfect tree, minimizing the damage caused by pests, improving how we grow and care for the trees in the fields, and helping tell the story of the Oregon Christmas tree.

At the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, south of Wilsonville, our research includes the establishment of five seed orchards at the research station that will soon begin producing improved seed for this industry. Our work with native Oregon

tree species and the bread-and-butter trees of our industry—Douglas-fir and noble fir—is the result of careful selection of remarkable trees found in grower fields, propagating, testing and screening over the past 30 years, to identify the best of the best genetics. These “premier” trees are now in orchards that will produce improved seed for future crops.



Tyler Stone applying leader control product at his tree farm near Jordan, OR

In addition, we have been searching the world for new tree species—not native to Oregon—to bring here and see if they might become an option for our growers. At NWREC, we now have seed orchards with select parent trees of Nordmann fir, Turkish fir, and Trojan fir—some of the only orchards in the world. Unfortunately with trees, we can’t produce results overnight—the growth cycles are just too long before we can develop reliable data.

Our goal with this genetic improvement work is to keep our Christmas tree industry on that cutting edge, making sure our tree quality is the best anywhere, and to ensure that our growers are competitive in the national market and beyond.

This holiday season, please support your local Christmas tree grower.

Happy holidays from your friends at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center!

For more OSU Extension information about growing or finding Christmas trees in Oregon, visit <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/forests/christmas-trees> or the NWREC website at <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/nwrec/christmas-trees>

Chal Landgren has been on the faculty of Oregon State University for the past 42 years. He is responsible for guiding OSU’s Christmas tree research and education program for the state—but most of his work is focused in the Willamette Valley where the majority of the growers are located and most of the annual harvest comes from.