



SUGAR PINES FARM

*promises
treasured
Christmas
memories
for all*

BY MARGIE WILBER

A crisp chill in the air and scent of fires burning in backyards and homes signal it's almost time to bundle up the kids in coats, hats, and scarves and venture out to select that perfect tree for Christmas. Sugar Pines Farm makes that experience all the more memorable with hay rides, a visit with Santa, bonfire pit, s'mores, and warm beverages so folks can add this year to their treasured holiday memories.

Sugar Pines Farm, located at 9500 Mulberry Road in Chesterland, is a 100-acre farm with 30 acres of fresh, fragrant Christmas trees in a park-like setting. Visitors can choose to cut their own tree from an expansive selection of Fraser Fir – considered the Cadillac of Christmas trees, Canaan Fir, Blue Spruce and Norway Spruce. Visitors may also select one from a variety of pre-cut trees up to 14 feet – Fraser fir, blue spruce, white pine, Scotch pine, concolor fir, Douglas fir – in addition to trees grown at Sugar Pines Farm for sale in the sales barn (which includes the area's only tree monorail!). Prices vary depending on the type of tree, height, and quality. In general, most trees are priced from \$8 to \$10 per foot, but may be adjusted up or down slightly to account for the quality of the tree. Tree prices include shaking, drilling, and baling (or netting), as well as sales tax.

Sure, there are many places families can go to purchase a Christmas tree, like big box stores, but remember: there is no guarantee you won't wake up Christmas morning to a pile of needles atop your beautifully wrapped gifts. Been there, done that! Owners Fritz and Jane Neubauer insist all trees sold at Sugar Pines Farm are freshly cut. Typically, 2,500 to 3,000 trees are sold annually at Sugar Pines Farm. While picking out the perfect tree, customers can also find a great selection of high-quality tree stands and tree care-related items, locally made maple syrup, beautifully decorated wreaths, swags, pine roping and other holiday décor.

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-Fritz Neubauer, owner, Sugar Pines Farm



The Neubauers, married 18 years, purchased the tree farm in August of 2012. Both were born and raised in the Cleveland area and have been proud Geauga County residents for almost 20 years. They say their sons, Fritz III, 12, and Sam, 8, are old enough to help out now, particularly during the busy holiday season. In fact, Fritz III has begun his own business selling firewood to customers of the farm.

Fritz is also a certified arborist and owner of Neubauer Land Management Company, a local tree service founded in 1996. "Fritz is the tree guy and handyman while I handle the books and marketing of Sugar Pines Farm," explains Jane. She formerly owned and operated Maple Alley Market Research, a market research firm based in Munson Township. Both Fritz and Jane bring business experience, a work ethic, and passion to their tree farm business. They also share a love for the outdoors!

"This is our fifth year as owners of the farm, and it has been nothing short of fantastic," states Jane enthusiastically. "We love everything about it – from working in the fields, to playing in the woods, and most of all, seeing all the excited families as they come out each year in search of their perfect Christmas tree."

Fritz adds, "When we purchased Sugar Pines Farm, it was already well-established. We have continued to plant 2,000-3,000 trees each year and expanded our marketing efforts to grow the business. Since that time, we have definitely increased our customer base, tripling sales of trees and other items out of the barn."

The Neubauers partner with other local businesses to offer a complete holiday experience for visitors to the farm. "Buckeye Chocolate provides the food and beverages including their own locally made chocolate treats, kettle corn, hot chocolate and coffee," Jane says. "They have been great and change up the snacks for guests. Family members and friends help prepare wreaths, swags and other holiday accoutrements sold in the barn."

In addition to free hayrides and visits with Santa, since purchasing the farm the Neubauers have added a campfire and s'mores pit to provide an even better experience for visitors. "We want families to consider Sugar Pines Farm a fun destination where they can cut their tree and spend time enjoying other activities at the farm," Jane describes. She says that schools visit



FUN FACTS

(source: National Christmas Tree Association)

- **Approximately 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in North America every year, totaling over \$1.2 billion in sales. About 78% are pre-cut and 22% cut-your-own.**
- **There are more than 350 million trees growing on Christmas tree farms in the U.S. alone.**
- **The top-selling Christmas trees nationwide are Fraser Fir, Balsam Fir, Douglas Fir, Noble Fir, Scotch Pine, Virginia Pine and White Pine.**
- **One acre of Christmas trees produces the daily oxygen requirement for 18 people.**
- **It can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of average retail-sales height (6 feet), but the average growing time is seven years.**
- **Christmas trees are grown in all 50 states and Canada. There are close to 15,000 farms growing Christmas trees in the U.S., and over 100,000 people are employed full or part-time in the industry.**
- **80% of artificial trees are manufactured in China.**
- **Real trees are a renewable, recyclable resource. Artificial trees contain non-biodegradable plastics and possible metal toxins such as lead.**
- **There are more than 4,000 local Christmas tree recycling programs throughout the United States.**
- **For every real Christmas tree harvested, two to three seedlings are planted in its place the following spring.**
- **President Pierce took the first Christmas tree into the White House in 1856. In 1923 President Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony, which is now celebrated every year.**



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the farm throughout the year on field trips to learn about farming. During the peak Christmas season, many extended families and friends enjoy a fun day of cutting down trees, taking a hay ride, and simply creating another memory.

While many people may think Christmas tree farming requires minimal work, Fritz is quick to dispel that myth. "This farm requires a good 10 months of solid work. Our only slow period is at the end of our sales season, during January and February," Fritz states.

He says spring is busy with plowing and tilling the fields, planting and fertilizing. "We get our seedlings from a variety of places," Fritz explains.

"They arrive about a foot tall, and each tree must be handled and analyzed. Then in the summer, each tree requires shearing. Mother Nature rarely grows a perfect tree. Trees need to be nurtured for an average of seven years before they are ready to sell as Christmas trees."

Jane interjects that they also try to stay away from using many pesticides. "We are careful about what we use and the quantity," she states.

Fritz continues, "Our summer and falls seasons are extremely busy with shearing and trimming of all the trees, additional weed control applications and mowing between the rows of trees. We also measure and price tag all of our trees that will be for sale."

Sugar Pines Farm also sells ball and burlap (B&B) trees – live trees that families can use for landscaping after the holidays. "These trees require special care and can only be inside the home for about 10 days," Jane reminds readers.

Sugar Pines Farm employs approximately 25 people at the height of the holiday season, mostly friends and family members. "This is part-time, seasonal help," clarifies Jane. "And most of our employees return each year."

At least 75 percent of Sugar Pines Farm customers are families with children under 18 years of age. "It has become a family tradition for many of our customers," says Jane. "Our season starts the day after Christmas, or Black Friday. We call it Green Friday here! It's incredibly busy on weekends up until Christmas. It is a busy, bustling place – a very happy place!"

"We have to make the majority of our income in those three to four weeks – primarily during those three weekends. We are here all the time during the holiday season, literally from 7 a.m. to late into the evening," Fritz states. "We have been pretty lucky with our sales seasons since purchasing the farm."

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- Fritz Neubauer, owner, Sugar Pines Farm





The Neubauers are also good neighbors. They donate many gift certificates to support locally causes and have a “Feel Good Field” with “Charlie Brown” trees available by donation only. In previous years all the money collected has gone to help family friends in need or “Operation Evergreen,” a service project of the Ohio Christmas Tree Association that ships trees overseas to troops based around the globe.

“We want to be good members of our community and be responsive to the needs of the community,” Jane says.

With 25,000 trees being carefully nurtured at Sugar Pines farm, families are assured of that perfect tree this holiday season. Fritz and Jane will be happy to help, offering you a sharp saw and sled for your convenience. And bring your family and friends. As Jane concludes, “People are happy when they come here. We love to see families making Sugar Pines Farm a family tradition. We have even had a couple engagements take place here – complete with a lighted sign that read, ‘Marry Me’, and champagne.” 🍷



SUGAR PINES FARM HOURS

Opens day after Thanksgiving

Weekdays:

12 to 5:30 p.m.

Open Thursdays until 8 p.m.

(Sorry, no cut-your-own trees after dark, pre-cut trees only)

Weekends (and Friday after Thanksgiving):

9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Phone:

440.729.1019

Web address:

www.sugarpinesfarm.com

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/sugarpinesfarm

Instagram:

#sugarpinesfarm

**Don't forget to purchase a Feel Good Field tree for your child's room, front porch or additional holiday decor to help our troops!*