Christmas Tree Farms Create Memories

(LSN) - Part of the joy of Christmas is creating memories. Two farms in Vermilion Parish are offering families the opportunity to try a new experience which will always remind them of the holiday season.

“It’s a family outing to come and pick a tree,” Lloyd Vincent of Vincent’s Christmas Tree Farm near Kaplan said. “The whole family comes out to pick a tree. Sometimes it takes four or five hours to find that perfect tree.”

Vincent’s is one of two Christmas tree farms in Vermilion. The second farm is J&D’s Christmas Tree Farm near Maurice.

“We were the first ones that started around here,” Vincent said. “I heard about Christmas tree farms in Progressive Farmer. They were growing them in Texas.”

Vincent planted 500 trees in the first year. His business has been a “learn-as-you-go” experience as he killed many of the first trees he planted when he tried to kill the grass around them.

It took four years for the first trees to grow large enough to begin selling them, Vincent said. Now Vincent has 15,000 trees planted on 13 or 14 acres.

Though growing Christmas trees may sound like fun, it is also a lot of hard work. Trees must be sprayed for insects, the grass around the trees has to be kept neatly mowed and fertilizer must be applied twice a year.

The trees must also be sheared twice a year, Vincent said. The retired carpenter straps on a backpack with a motor attached to a set of blades approximately six or seven feet long. He then goes around each of the 15,000 trees, trimming the branches. Then Vincent’s wife, Lena, goes behind him and shapes the top of each of the 15,000 trees. The whole process takes two weeks.

J&D’s Christmas Tree Farm is owned by Jerome and Debra Meaux and they are entering their seventh selling season. With 10 1/2 acres planted in Christmas trees, the Meaux’s have about 1,000 trees ready for sale this year.

“Jerome started this as a hobby,” Mrs. Meaux said. “He decided to try them out and tried on his seven days off. His friends told him it was fun and interesting.”

J&D’s is operated similarly to Vincent’s. Both husband and wife are active in the business and share the work.

J&D’s farm sells Virginia Pine and Leland Cypress trees, just as
Vincent’s does. Debra Meaux said the Leland Cypress is a new tree. “This is the first year we sell them,” Meaux said. “They are popular and very pretty. They’ve just perfected them to be grown down here.” J&D’s sells trees from four feet tall to 10 feet tall. They also sell Charlie Brown trees, trees with very few twigs, Meaux said. The Charlie Brown trees are used as either gag gifts or for making wreaths and garlands.

Like Vincent’s, J&D supplies everything needed to find the perfect tree. Saws are handed out to the hearty who want to cut their own trees. Or, workers can cut the trees for those who just aren’t up to it.

Both farms also have shakers - which shake all the dry needles out of the trees - and balers to put netting over the trees to be brought home.

Vincent’s has already begun selling a few trees and expects Thanksgiving week to be very busy. J&D’s does not start selling their trees until 3 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day.

J&D’s is located on Parish road P-4-8. To find the farm, turn off Hwy. 167 onto P-4-9 (between Southern Engines and Duhon’s Merchandise).

To go to Vincent’s travel north from Kaplan on La. 35, turn right on La. 700 and follow the signs.