

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees offer a viable option for landowners looking for sources of income. The majority of Christmas tree farms in Fauquier County are part time operations that consist of only a few acres of choose and cut trees. It generally takes 6-10 years to produce marketable trees, depending on species. White pine, Scotch pine, and Norway Spruce are the most common trees grown, but several other species of spruces and firs can also be grown. Generally speaking, pines are faster growing and can be harvested in 6-7 years, while most spruce and fir take a few years longer.

Christmas trees do take some amount of care. They cannot just be planted and left to themselves to grow. Mowing and weed control are important, as well as regular monitoring for insects and disease. Shearing and training usually starts in the third year, and for pines, shearing must be done from late June to mid-July, the hottest part of the summer. Also, the selling season will tie up weekends in the busy Holiday season.

Anyone growing Christmas trees should also consider selling trees for the landscape industry. Five to six foot pines and spruce are popular with homeowners and landscapers, and can be sold throughout the year. Provisions must be made for digging trees, and it will probably involve some sort of tree digging machine that can be mounted to a tractor. It is important to remember that anyone selling live trees (with the roots attached) must have a nursery license from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. All nurseries are inspected on a regular basis to make sure no insect or disease ridden plants are being sold. Christmas tree farms that are choose and cut only do not need a nursery license, but any farm that sells balled and burlapped live trees, or advertise 'You Dig' does need a license. The license fee is \$75 annually and does not need to be purchased until the year the trees reach a marketable size.

There are several sources of help for establishing a Christmas tree operation. The Virginia Cooperative Extension service has numerous publications on their website at <http://ext.vt.edu/resources/>. Select 'Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife', then 'Christmas Trees'. The two publications that follow, 'Species for Christmas Tree Planting in Virginia', and 'Introduction to Growing Christmas Trees in Virginia' are just two of ten publications available from this site.

The Virginia Department of Forestry is a good source of seedlings for planting Christmas trees. Their main office for orders is located at the Augusta Forestry Center in Crimora. Local Forestry Offices distribute a catalogue each fall. Orders are taken throughout fall and winter for spring delivery. Seedling information and order forms are also available on the VDF website at <http://www.state.vipnet.org/dof/>. Select 'Seedlings' under the Forest Management heading. Large orders (over 1000 seedlings) are shipped to local forestry offices for pick-up. Smaller orders are shipped directly to the purchaser. Christmas tree seedlings can cost as little as a quarter, to over a dollar each depending on species and quantity ordered. The VDF sells primarily white pine, Scotch pine, and Norway spruce for Christmas tree production. Other species of pine, spruce, and fir are readily available from numerous mail order nurseries. Another source of information is the Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association. They have a website at <http://www.vctga.com/> with additional information on joining the organization, as well as details of the services they provide their members.

More Christmas Tree Links:

[Introduction to Growing Christmas Trees in Virginia](#)
[Species for Christmas Tree Planting](#)