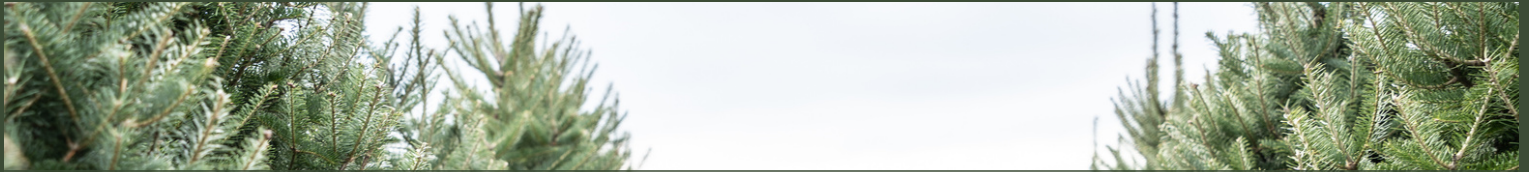


Christmas Trees



Across the country, over 300,000 acres are dedicated to growing a traditional holiday sight, the Christmas tree. In 2012, over 17 million trees were harvested for display in homes and public areas. Illinois alone accounted for about 66,000 of these trees from over 250 different tree farms.

Today, 98% of Christmas trees are grown on farms and can take up to 15 years to grow at least 6 feet tall. They can be recycled to provide benefits to the environment. For each tree harvested, Christmas tree farmers plant one to three more seeds. On average, trees are harvested at about seven years old.



The National Christmas Tree Association established the first Christmas Spirit Foundation in 2005. The goal of the Christmas Spirit Foundation is to spread the spirit and joy of Christmas throughout the year. The foundation created the Trees for Troops program to give free Christmas Trees to our military all over the world.



Christmas trees include different species of firs, spruces, and pines. These trees are often referred to as evergreens because they stay green year round. These trees are grown and harvested in 45 different states.

Cook County, Illinois uses old Christmas trees to rebuild housing structures for wildlife that have been destroyed through urban development.



Meet the Richardson Family

Richardson Farms | Spring Grove, IL

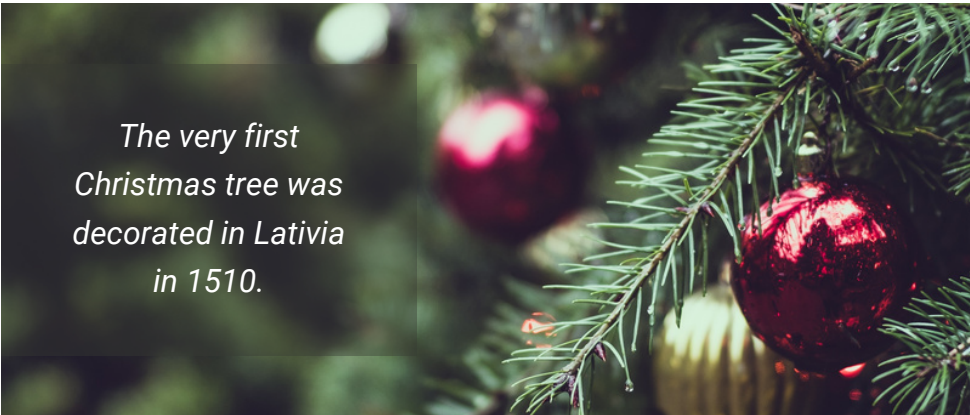


Tell us about your farm.

Our farm is just 2 miles south of Wisconsin and 20 miles west of Lake Michigan which means there are millions of people within driving distance. Our ancestors couldn't have known this would be the case when they founded our first 160 acres here in 1840. Today, we are primarily an agri-tourism farm. In the fall, we host 80,000 visitors to our Adventure Farm and we are the home of the world's largest corn maze. After Thanksgiving, we will have well over 6,000 choose-and-cut Christmas trees, along with 1,000 wraths and greenery. We are currently in our 16th year in this business. We have 530 acres in all with 120 acres devoted to the Christmas tree business, 70 acres for the fall business, 110 acres used for mining, and 230 acres of corn and soybeans.

How do Christmas trees differ from other crops?

Christmas trees are an agricultural crop, but caring for them is different. First, we plant the 15-20 inch tall seedlings in an open area with a planter to help put them in the ground. In smaller areas, or where we are replacing dead trees, we drill a hole in the ground and plant seedlings. We control weeds two tree rows at a time with a small tractor that sprays the ground under the trees. Between each tree row, there is a 3 ft. strip of grass which we have to mow and weed several times each summer. We also have to hand trim the trees one row at a time on all 100 acres.



The very first Christmas tree was decorated in Latvia in 1510.