

Christmas tree farms or plantations as they are sometimes called are great places to visit prior to the Christmas season. Many Louisiana Christmas tree farms also have activities for fall fun too. So before or after you tag your tree, you can harvest a pumpkin for a Jack-o-Lantern for Halloween, a table decoration for Thanksgiving or select one just to eat.

I grew up harvesting my Christmas tree on family land, and we walked miles and chopped down several before we found the “right one.” One of my favorite trees growing up was a “one-sided beauty.” That year we positioned the tree in a corner so that no one would realize that it was only one-sided. Today, with commercially grown trees, there are lots of “right ones” to choose.

Christmas tree farms are also part of one of the fastest growing segments in tourism-agritourism. These tree farms provide added income to the farmer and offer fun activities for families. Many of our area farms are also open to school groups.

Today 98% of Christmas trees are grown on Christmas tree farms. Christmas tree farms add oxygen to the atmosphere and create a habitat for wildlife. Once harvested new trees can be planted and the harvested trees can be used to mulch or be placed in ponds for fish habitats.

Christmas tree farms generally open the day after Thanksgiving and continue to sell trees until Christmas Eve. Select a farm that offers trees and entertainment for the family. Recently, I visited Curry Farms in Rayville, LA. They offer a wide selection of trees and have entertainment for the children while they bag your tree for the ride home. They have a cow train, duck races, and a horse ride for children to enjoy. They can be contacted at (318) 728-6203 or online at [www.curryfarms.net](http://www.curryfarms.net)

Louisiana has lots of Christmas tree farms and most of them are listed on one or both of these websites: <http://www.southernchristmastrees.org/> and <http://pickyourownchristmastree.org/>. In addition to helping you locate a tree, these websites offer helpful information in how to select and care for your tree.

Live trees can last for weeks if properly cared for. Here are some suggestions:

- Remove a ½ inch disk of wood from the base of the trunk before placing the tree in the stand. This cut should be perpendicular to the tree; cutting at an angle or using a “v” cut will make it difficult to place in the tree stand.
- Select a tree stand that has a bowl that can accommodate water. The recommended bowl size is one quart of water per inch of tree diameter.
- Select a stand that accommodates the diameter of your tree. For best results, never whittle down the tree to fit the stand, you will be removing the outer layer of wood that is the most efficient in taking up water.
- Water the tree immediately when you arrive home; if you are not ready to place it in the stand, put it in a bucket with water. Keeping your tree hydrated will prevent browning and needle loss.

- Water the tree daily; make sure that the base of the tree is standing in water. The temperature of the water is not important; either hot or cold works.
- Finally, place your tree away from heat sources: fireplaces, heaters, heat vents, direct sunlight. Lowering your thermostat is also recommended.
- Select lights with low heat to reduce the drying of the tree. Inspect your light sets for safety before hanging them on the tree. Use an extension cord or multi-plug device to avoid an electrical overload.