



# Editorial: It's time for Christmas tree growers to tell their story



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There's an old saying that holds that it is truly an ill wind that doesn't blow someone some good. It appears that the COVID-19 pandemic could give Christmas tree farmers a boost this year.

The pandemic will change this year's Christmas celebrations. Social distancing and other restrictions will upend many traditional holiday events and gatherings. But according to a survey commissioned by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, consumers are now more likely to appreciate "simple pleasures" and focus on creating new traditions.

Among consumers who expect the pandemic to alter their celebrations, 39% say they're more likely to buy a real Christmas tree, compared to 21% who say they're less likely to do so.

About 76% of consumers described real trees as an experience rather than a product, while only 49% described artificial trees this way. Real trees were also described as "special" by 76% of survey respondents compared to 46% for artificial trees.

About 79% of respondents said they wanted this Christmas to be more special than normal and 82% said they wanted to make it more memorable.

The Christmas tree industry is understandably giddy.

"Clearly, the thought process is leaning toward experience, toward making the holiday a bright part of the year," said Marsha Gray, executive director of the promotion board, which raises funds for industry research and promotions. "Consumers tend to turn toward things that make them feel good and happy."

It's a good opportunity for growers to reinforce the experience of having a real tree this Christmas. They have a formidable foe in the American Christmas Tree Association, a mis-named nonprofit that represents the foreign artificial Christmas tree industry.

Fake Christmas trees made mostly in China by workers making pennies an hour continue to flood the market. The American Christmas Tree Association has for years touted the advantages of buying these plastic trees, much of this in the form of misinformation about the environmental advantages of fake trees.

U.S. tree growers have an opportunity this year to tell their story and remind consumers that a real tree is a traditional part of Christmas. In these uncertain times, few things can create a real experience as will a Christmas tree grown in the United States.



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