

FRASER

Fir is becoming most popular tree

Continued from Page 1

the whole family, and they've got the kids all bundled up and they have a good time. They take pictures and even movies sometimes."

Making it a family tradition is just what Carrie Wicker has done. Wicker and husband Ken are excited to take 3-month-old Jacob on his first tree-picking excursion

with big sisters Abigail, 4, and Samantha, 2.

"We just thought it was a good way to include our kids more in the holiday," Wicker said about why they first decided to cut down their own tree. "(And a way to) get a little exercise and some fresh air. You get a sense of family. It really gets everybody in the mood for Christmas. It sparks that spirit."

"It gets you away from the commercialism and back to spending time with your family and what the holidays are really about."

Wicker's oldest daughter, Abigail, was only two when they first went to a tree

farm.

"Abigail thought it was pretty cool. We've only done it for two years, but she's already talking about it. So how can we not?" Wicker said. "She's already telling her sister 'we're going to go chop down a tree.'"

Wicker added that part of the attraction of cutting down their own tree is just seeing their kids get so excited.

"It's a lot of fun with children. They get so excited," Wicker said. "It's so exciting to see them get excited."

And that excitement and enthusiasm means the Wicker family will be annual customers at the local tree

farms.

"We'll probably keep doing it as long as we can. It's kind of sucked us in," Wicker said. "The atmosphere is very festive. It's a neat thing. I just thought it was a great family experience."

While some people are just starting the tradition of cutting down their own Christmas tree, John Sak is continuing a tradition started by his parents.

Growing up in Midland, Sak can't remember a time when he and his sisters weren't trudging through the snow with their parents trying to find a tree that would satisfy everyone.

"We always went out to a tree farm, for as long as I can

remember," Sak said. "It was just fun."

Now Sak and wife Kristin relish taking their kids Ellie 6, and Jake 4, to pick out a tree. With busy schedules and all commercialized aspects of the season that get in the way, the Saks appreciate their special family time.

"There are so many other distractions going on. There's not a lot of traditions left," Sak said. "This is just about family. There are no timelines. (The kids) get to help pick out the tree, and they like running around the tree farm."

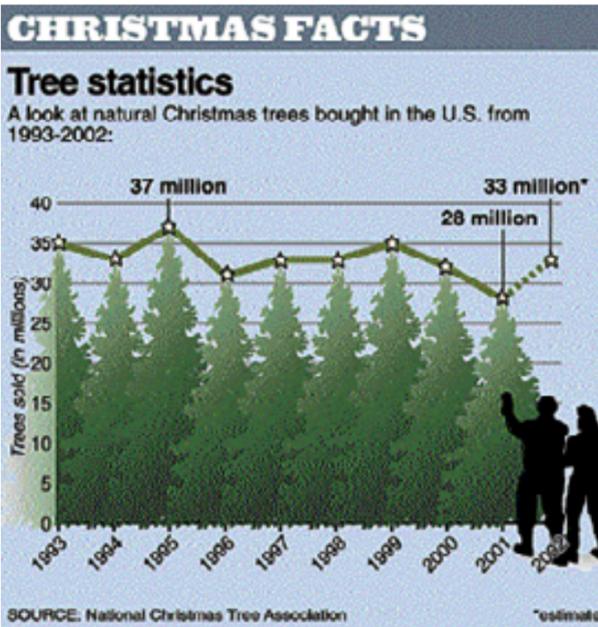
"It gets you pumped up for Christmas. It's a lot of fun, and we look forward to it."

Because Sak's parents live in the area, they are able to accompany the family to pick out a tree; they even get a tree for themselves. And what's more, they are able to watch their grandchildren enjoy a tradition they started all those years ago.

"I think it means as much to them as it does to us," Sak said.

Schmuckal's Tree Farm offers choose-and-cut every Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to dusk. Covell's is open daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Choose-and-cut, though, is only available during daylight hours. Both businesses provide saws.

Jill Jenkins is a local freelance writer.



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