



## #FridaysOnTheFarm: Pining for the Holidays

From the kitchen table to the boardroom table, the USDA brings people together across the nation for: healthier food, natural resources, and people; a stronger agricultural industry; and economic growth, jobs, and innovation.

Each Friday, meet those farmers, producers, and landowners through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas where USDA customers and partners *do right and feed everyone*.

This Friday, meet Scott Powell and Christopher Maciborski, evergreen farmers in northern Michigan. The brothers-in-law, and their families, cultivate holiday cheer at [Dutchman Tree Farms](#) by providing cut Christmas trees and wreaths for families across the country.

### Family Roots

While it may not be the North Pole, Christmas tree farming is a way of life for many families in rural Michigan communities.

“As a fourth grader, I remember planting trees after school for people. They would pick up kids from school, and we’d go plant trees for the afternoon,” said Christopher. “Almost every year of my life since the fourth grade, I’ve had something to do with the Christmas tree industry.”

From the tree nurseries and wreath making facility, to marketing and shipping, everything at Dutchman Tree Farms is managed by the family of the founding owners.

“It’s just a great place to come to work every day and work with family,” said Christopher. Dutchman Tree Farms employs 35 full-time employees and up to 450 seasonal employees.

They harvest over 750,000 cut Christmas trees, 60,000 potted evergreens, and 30,000 ball and burlap trees annually.

Trimnings from the cut Christmas trees are collected and taken to the farm’s wreath-making facility, where they are fashioned into over 450,000 fresh holiday wreaths.

“We’re thinking about Christmas 365 days a year. I love it,” said Christopher. “The only one who would have a better job is Santa Claus.”

## Planning Ahead

It takes 10 to 12 years of investment, careful pruning, and suitable weather to grow a Christmas tree from seed to harvest.

“The seedlings are most vulnerable in the first couple of years. Once they survive, if the weather is not too dry, then they usually make it,” said Scott.

The farm worked with USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) to develop and implement a conservation plan that included irrigation management, cover crops, grass waterways, and pest management through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#).

The program provides agricultural producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement conservation practices. Using these practices can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving agricultural operations.

Dutchman Tree Farms also used the program to design and install a chemical storage and handling facility, fuel storage, and fuel handling pads.

## Disaster Assistance

Despite Scott and Christopher's best planning and efforts, extreme weather, and natural disasters can devastate an otherwise healthy stand of evergreens.

The [Tree Assistance Program](#), administered by USDA's [Farm Service Agency](#), provides financial assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers, including cut Christmas tree growers, to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes, and vines lost by natural disasters.

“If I had a choice, I'd rather grow it,” said Christopher. “But, it's a nice program to be a part of when we do have a loss.”

## More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States weather ups and downs in the market and recover from natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations. [Learn about additional programs](#).

For more information about USDA programs and services, [contact your local USDA service center](#).



## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Follow the [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) story series and other news you can use on [farmers.gov](#) and our social media channels: [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#), and [Facebook](#).

*Story and Photo Credits: Savannah Halleaux, Farm Service Agency*