

Published December 7th, 2011

## Lots of Trees in Lamorinda

Cathy Dausman



Asher (left) and Eric Menke of Orinda picked out an 11-foot Christmas tree at McDonnell Nursery on Saturday. Photo Andy Scheck

Recent sunshine and 60 degree weather might not put you in the Christmas mood, but visiting tree lots could make a believer out of even the Grinch. Lamorinda lots seem steeped in tradition, and each offers something unique. Here's a look at who's selling real, full-sized Christmas trees:

Sue Renno has sold trees in the Las Trampas pool parking lot (Glenside Drive and St. Mary's Road) in Lafayette for 18 of the last 19 years. Renno's trees are from her father's Oregon tree farm. She sells only Noble firs, which she says last longer, are sturdier, have nicely spaced branches and carry weight well. The trees are kept in water stands at the lot to keep them fresh. "I love selling trees," Renno says enthusiastically, noting the product's great color, freshness and fullness. She also loves visiting with her repeat customers, who range from Rossmoor residents to Lamorindans buying for themselves, their parents, and their grown children. One local family arrived on roller blades to buy its tree, and took it home in a wagon. Renno offers wreaths sales from Boy Scout Troop 204. Her trees are priced by height increments starting at \$60 for 5-6 feet; trees over 8 feet cost \$105. Lot hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily; children receive candy canes with their tree.

J.R. Bierly runs Honey Bear Trees, on Deer Hill at Pleasant Hill (near Acalanes High School). Bierly grew up selling trees in the Bay Area and has been at this location five years. When not selling, he coaches baseball at Acalanes and Lamorinda Baseball Academy. He hires local high school students to work the lot. "I like to keep the money in the community," he says. Bierly also offers a 20% sales donation to schools and nonprofit groups. Wood chips cover the ground and their smell vies with that of the tree inventory - Noble fir (sheared or natural style), Douglas fir and an East Coast favorite, Fraser fir. Fraser trees are tall and narrow; their needles are silver underneath. Trees range from 2-3 feet to 15 feet in height and cost between \$21 and \$300. Delivery and setup is extra. Bierly hand picks his Oregon-farmed trees, and likes to donate leftovers late in the season to local charities or churches. Honey Bear Trees is named after the bee hives which populate one tree farm; a jar of honey goes home with each tree. The lot is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, and Santa Claus visits from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. December 10 and 11.

Lafayette Boy Scout Troop 224 has been in the

Christmas tree sales business since 1958, long enough that one current scout parent was a troop Eagle Scout. Parent Joanne Layshock says this is the only local troop selling trees. Scouts unload and set up day after Thanksgiving. Parent volunteers staff the lot at Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Risa Road during school hours, working in three hour shifts. The scouts work afternoon and evening shifts. The lot is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, and offers four varieties of fresh cut Oregon trees:

Small Scotch pine trees (2 to 4 feet) are \$25; Grand firs (6 to 8 feet) are \$70 to \$90; Douglas firs (5 to 9 feet) cost \$40 to \$90 and Noble firs (2 to 10 feet) are \$22 to \$160. Christmas wreaths decorated by troop parents are also available. There's free hot cocoa, and Lamorinda seniors get free local delivery. A portion of each tree sale is tax-deductible. The lot is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. through December 20 or until trees sell out.

Bob Holland, of Bob's Christmas Trees, has sold trees in Moraga for 36 years from a corner lot at School Street and Moraga Way. He hires local high school students to work and marvels that one such employee has returned yearly "for the last 15 to 18 years." Holland's trees are mostly from Oregon; he sells a selection of Noble fir, Douglas fir, Grand firs, Nordman (a cross-bred tree) plus "a few Silvertip". Trees are 3 to 10 feet tall and prices start at \$15. Wreaths and flocking is available. The retired Oakland policeman keeps flexible lot hours, usually from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Holland says the first two weekends in December are critical to sales, but notes a few traditionalists wait until Christmas Eve to buy their tree. He says he'll be there then. Holland travels the country on an over-70 senior

softball team the rest of the year.

Joe's Quality Christmas Trees is across from the gazebo on Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette for a second year. Joe Natina and his brother-in-law Steve Sewell bring in Oregon Silvertips and Noble firs, and price them from \$15 to \$17 per foot (Silvertips) and \$10 to \$13 per foot (Noble). Grand firs will be available shortly. The trees arrive weekly in small shipments to keep them fresh. Custom wreaths are available and children can make their own mistletoe decorations. Lot hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily through December 24.

Some local nurseries, a hardware store, a drug store and one grocery store also sell full size trees. Lafayette's Ace Hardware, Moraga Hardware and Lumber and Orinda True Value Hardware do not, but they do offer tree lights and accessories. Moraga Ace Hardware is also a participant in the Lights for Life cancer fundraiser (<http://www.lightsforlifeinc.com/>), and Orinda Hardware has a model train display the kid in everyone should enjoy. Orinda's Rite Aid sells cut trees.

Orchard Supply Hardware in Moraga sells wreaths, garlands, cones and stands plus Douglas, Noble and Grand fir trees, from 5 to 9 feet tall. Prices range from \$21.99 to \$74.99, and "elf trees" are \$18.99. Orchard Nursery stocks Nordman, Noble and Silvertip trees in heights to 14 feet. Price quotes were unavailable by phone. Orchard Nursery also carries wreaths and greens and features a store display of 63 decorated trees.

Orinda's McDonnell Nursery stocks some live trees plus 2 to 12 foot tall cut Noble firs from Washington. Tree prices (\$20 to \$350) include free home delivery and setup. McDonnell suggests buying a tree bag for easy cleanup. They will also spray trees with fire retardant (a requirement for trees in public spaces) for \$6/foot.

Lafayette's Whole Foods carries sustainably-harvested Noble firs from Oregon and Washington in 6 to 7 foot height, for \$39.99 while supplies last.

Tree Shopping: the Basics

Local Stores offering cut Christmas trees:

- McDonnell Nursery, Orinda (925) 254-3713
- Orchard Nursery, Lafayette (925) 284-4474
- Orchard Supply Hardware, Moraga (925) 377-0994
- Rite Aid, Orinda (925) 253-1904
- Whole Foods, Lafayette (925) 284-5305

Seasonal Lots:

Sue Renno's, Lafayette

Las Trampas Pool parking lot, St. Mary's at Glenside

Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily

Extras: candy canes, also sell Boy Scout wreaths

Trees: Noble Firs only

Price: \$60 to \$105, depending on size

Honey Bear Trees, Lafayette

Near Acalanes High School, Deer Hill at Pleasant Hill

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily

Extras: Santa Claus visits Dec. 10 & 11, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Trees: Noble Firs, Doug Firs and Frasers

Price: \$21 to \$300, depending on size and type

Boy Scout Troop 224, Lafayette

Mt. Diablo Boulevard at Risa Road

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed after Dec. 20

Extras: wreaths available, free hot chocolate, free senior delivery

Trees: Noble Fir, Grand Fir, Doug Fir and Scotch pine

Price: \$22 and up, depending on size and type

Bob's Tree Lot, Moraga

School Street at Moraga Way

Hours: flexible. Generally 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Extras: flocking available

Trees: Noble, Doug, Grand, Nordman and a few Silvertip

Price: starting at \$15

Joe's Quality Christmas Trees, Lafayette

Across from the Gazebo on Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Extras: wreaths available; children can make mistletoe decorations

Trees: Silvertip, Noble; Grand firs coming soon

Price: \$10 to \$17 per foot



Honey Bear Trees proprietor J.R. Bierly (left) and Tommy Beritzhoff Photo Cathy Dausman

Reach the reporter at: [cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA