



Williams Tree Farm

Family owned and operated for over 60 years, Williams Tree Farm is a must for locals this time of the year. Carlton and Amelia Williams and their son Wayne, purchased the farm in 1940. They initially ran the farm as a dairy and hog setup, lumber was harvested from the farm and was used at what once was The Wagon Wheel, a momentous resort in Rockton, IL.



To make up for the trees that were harvested, new seedlings were planted in their place. One year, a winter storm led to a short supply of Christmas trees. The saplings that were planted were harvested to meet that demand, and just like that, a new business was born!

“The story goes that grandfather (Carlton Williams) was gone and there was a big snow storm up north,” said Williams, “everyone in the area knew that there were trees here and they wanted to purchase them for Christmas. So one tree led to two and then another and so on. Eventually, Dad (Wayne Williams) had a problem; how was he going to tell his father that he cut down all of these trees? So he took the dollar bills and put them in a grocery sack and dumped them on grandfather’s desk. It’s said that he never even looked up; he just started counting dollar bills. We have been in the tree business ever since”

Christmas tree production has been the focus for decades. The farm ships trees to local areas as well as locations in the suburbs of Chicago. However, as customers began to want more of an experience while picking out their tree, Williams Tree Farm led the industry in becoming choose and cut farm. Now more than ever, making memories is what they are all about.

Even though many consumers see the tree farm as a fun family experience, it is just that: a farm. “The difference between row crop farming and Christmas tree farming is Christmas trees are all manual labor,” said Williams, “It is not very mechanized at all. The most mechanization we have is a skid-steer.” Tree farming differs from traditional farming in other ways as well. For instance,

you can plant and harvest the same crop of corn in one year. As for trees, “The quickest you can get them to produce is seven to eight years for a standard size Christmas tree,” said Williams, “A lot can happen in those years out in the field.”

Williams Tree farm offers both precut as well as cut your own trees from varieties such as Fraser Fir, Canaan Fir, Balsam Fir, Colorado Blue Spruce, Norway Spruce, Scotch Pine, and White Pine. They have a large selection of wreaths from 18 inches in diameter thru 8 foot and have many specialty greens, square wreaths, candy canes, crosses and other shapes as well as garland, and cemetery items.

“Christmas tree farming is pretty glamorous during December,” said Williams. “However, the rest of the year is pretty much filled with work also.” As soon as the weather permits, the Williams’ will prepare the field for planting and removing the stumps. Then, they begin the planting process and when the trees are large enough, the Williams’ will shape and prune the trees. All year long, the Williams’ are taking action to prevent diseases and other factors that can harm their trees. There are many enemies to a seedling as well as young trees, including drought.

“I was pretty excited this year when I saw the mild temperatures,” said Williams. The mid-fifties doesn’t seem like the kind of weather we think about when it comes to Christmas trees, but according to Williams, this is perfect weather for your tree to thrive in. “One big enemy to a cut Christmas tree is the dry heat from furnaces,” said Williams. So, in reality, this moisture and high humidity we have been seeing this winter can help your cut Christmas tree stay fresher, longer. Therefore, keeping your tree away from heat sources and allowing your tree to rehydrate will keep it lasting longer. According to Williams, “When your cut tree does dry out, it is safer to not use lights, the Christmas lights are what cause the fires.” Williams claims that firefighters have told him that the majority of Christmas tree fires actually happen after Christmas because consumers tend to not think about it as much, it is still really important to keep your tree hydrated and be cautious of the light you are using.



Down on the farm, the Christmas tree farm that is, there are many, many activities to partake in. Hop on a horse drawn wagon, take time for a walk and enjoy the evergreen trees, warm yourself by their new outside fire pits, visit the animals, get lost in the maze, or take a pony or kiddie train ride, and that’s just outside! Inside, you can shop around the gift shop, view the precut trees displayed indoors, grab a bite to eat at the Cabin Café, get your hands on some delicious

homemade fudge at the Candy Corner, pick up some wreaths, roping, and more at the Greens Department, take a walk through the Blizzard if you dare, and of course double check that you made the nice-list when you visit Santa on the weekends.

The experience at William's Tree Farm is not complete without a visit from the Tree Farm Goldens. For over 20 years the family has had golden retrievers at the farm. At first it was one, and then it was two, now it is 7. "Each has his or her own personality and they take their public relations job very seriously. They will ride the wagon with you or walk the farm with you," said Don Williams, owner of Williams Tree Farm. The Farm now has a different colored dog running around, a Bernese Mountain dog puppy. The William's breed their dogs and so sometimes, puppies are available for cuddling.

Don Williams, who currently owns and operates the farm in partnership with his wife and four sons, brother, and sister, truly enjoys interacting with his customers, "We enjoy the selling season," Williams said. "Other tree farms are really good at growing and don't necessarily like the selling part, we at Williams Tree Farm enjoy helping people make their Christmas tree shopping an enjoyable experience. Being a tree farmer is not as easy as it looks, but we are growing these trees for our customers. If they didn't enjoy it, we wouldn't do it."

Williams Tree Farm is now closed for the season. On behalf of the entire Williams family, "Thank you to all who support our local business. We truly appreciate our customers."

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