

Cutting a tree adds magic to the holiday

By Kathryn Reed

Charlie Brown Christmas trees are more abundant in the wild. Mother Nature doesn't seem to make perfectly coiffed trees.

Those "perfect" trees are found on lots because the owners of tree farms took the time and had the patience to make them so.

Many people make the tree cutting an annual event. It's not just people in Tahoe who do this. All those trees on car roofs, and sticking out of trunks and back windows are most likely people who came to the lake to cut their tree.



Cutting a Christmas tree is a ritual for many in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Cutting trees is not a solitary event. It usually takes two haul it back to the car " especially if you've hiked in a ways.

A group of friends gathers each Thanksgiving weekend in

Stateline for a hearty breakfast before trekking into the forest with saws.

This year one Tahoe Paradise couple got a permit to cut a massive tree for their high-ceiling living room, while allowing family to cut small trees off their property.

Another couple, Rene and Mark Gorevin have been cutting their tree on and off for more than 20 years, having started the tradition when they lived in the Bay Area and did so at a farm there.

“Before the (2007 Angora) fire, we were even able to cut down fairly close to our house in allowed Forest Service land,” Renee Gorevin said. “That was fun as we took turns carrying it back to the house. The last 100 yards or so would involve some complaining about who wanted such a tall tree – of course everyone blamed mom-which I admit was true – our hands full of fresh pitch, our arms and backs straining. Thank goodness Mark has the tools and skills and is able to build a stand for the tree as cutting down your own means you can’t pay the extra three bucks to have the lot crew attach the stand.”

Holidays are about traditions and making memories. The Gorevins certainly provided what should be a lasting memory for an exchange student from Mexico.

“I remember Ilenia was cold all winter as she was used to 70 degree weather at Christmas time. Naturally that year we had to get a big tree to show off, especially in our open beam great room,” Gorevin said. “She was thrilled and amazed to be able to take a short hike to USFS Christmas tree land and offer her advice about which tree to choose. What a trooper she was, bearing the cold, the sawing and carrying that 12-foot tree back home. We needed the big ladder to decorate that year.”

If imperfection is what you are looking for this holiday

season, then consider getting a permit from the U.S. Forest Service to cut a tree. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit issued about 3,500 permits in 2008.

National Forests have allowed the public to cut trees for decades, but it wasn't until 2003 that the local office started to do so.

“There are two main purposes. The first is to provide the opportunity for the public to participate in a traditional holiday experience. The second, this helps at least in a modest way in reducing the overcrowded densities of small diameter trees in portions of the basin,” Rex Norman, UFSF spokesman said. “The white fir is the most sought after tree, and this type coincidentally, represents the majority of our small tree overpopulation.”

Each year the Forest Service's vegetation management staff scours the land to choose which areas to issue permits for. Maps are supplied when the permit is issued.

The Forest Service isn't trying to compete with the lots that opened last weekend. But the self-cutting is a lot cheaper, albeit more work, too. Permits are \$10 and can be secured at the Forest Service office. All the money collected goes back to Washington into the general fund for the agency.

For more information, go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/passes-permits/holiday-tree.shtml>.

No matter where you get your tree, remember what Anna Getty, author of “I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas” says – cutting a local Christmas tree is more green than artificial.