

FIRST

 CLOSER LOOK

FARMING CHRISTMAS

At work on the world's largest fir-tree farm. *by Paul Kvinta*

Photograph by GREGG SEGAL

WITH THE POSSIBLE exception of making toys or herding reindeer, it's hard to imagine Mark Arkills doing anything but farming Christmas trees. He has a full white beard, ruddy cheeks, blue eyes, and an ample belly. He's surveying a vast field of six- and seven-foot-tall Douglas firs growing in neat rows in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Two machete-wielding farmhands are quietly shaping each tree into something appropriate for the living room. "It's nice and quiet here now," Arkills says. "But trust me, it won't be this way for long."

Arkills is the production manager for Holiday Tree Farms, the world's largest Christmas-tree producer. Beginning in late October, Holiday's staff will swell from about 250 employees to 700 working 16-hour shifts. They will fan out across the company's 8,500 acres, while about



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Harvesting trees in King's Valley, outside Corvallis, Ore., to ship to Japan



a half-dozen helicopters crisscross the sky, each hauling 15 trees per load to processing centers. The trees are then transported to markets as far away as Puerto Rico and Pago Pago, Samoa. By mid-December the company will have cut and transported 1 million trees. “We’ve got a small window of opportunity to get it right,” Arkills says. “We’re one of the few agricultural products where after a certain date, the product is completely worthless.”

Americans bought nearly 31 million Christmas trees last year, spending an average of \$34.85 and generating more than \$1 billion.

44%

AMOUNT OF U.S. CHRISTMAS TREES PRODUCED IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

Holiday’s noncontiguous farmland extends 100 miles, from Salem to Eugene, covering five counties and 70 locations. The company (which is

private) grossed \$25 million in 2011, mostly from Douglas and noble firs.

It was Holiday’s founder, Hal Schudel, who in 1955 pioneered growing Christmas trees in rows. “We really are no different than any other crop,” says Hal’s son John, who owns the company with his two brothers and two of his nephews. Each year Holiday plants more than 1 million two-year-old seedlings. After two years, workers prune the trees once a year, shaping them into that perfect cone. Holiday harvests its Douglas and noble firs after six to eight years. The company is now growing more of what Arkills calls “table-top trees.” “There’s been a bigger demand for two- to four-footers,” he says. “They say it’s the bad economy. I say it’s a baby boomer thing. That generation is getting too old to deal with a big tree.”

APP EXTRA

Go to the new *Fortune* tablet app to see a photo gallery and read more about shipping trees around the globe.

THE CHARTIST

THE DISAPPEARING DESKTOP

LinkedIn recently asked more than 7,000 members of its professional network in 18 countries about which office supplies they see going the way of the dodo in the next five years. Topping the list was the tape recorder. Here are seven other habits and tools destined for extinction. *By Jennifer Abbasi / Graphic by Nicolas Rapp*

1 TAPE RECORDERS are expected to be gone by 2017, according to 79% of respondents.

2 ZIP DRIVES will decline as the global market for cloud computing grows from \$40.7 billion in 2011 to more than \$241 billion in 2020.

3 PALM PILOTS, along with sales of other PDAs, went down 94% between 2002 and 2012.

4 CUBICLES are getting replaced by collaborative and shared space—19% of LinkedIn respondents expect the cubicle to disappear in the next five years.



5 DESKTOP COMPUTERS will be replaced by tablets. By 2016 consumers are expected to buy 375 million tablets worldwide, with almost a third sold directly to businesses, according to the research firm Forrester.

6 ROLODEXES are increasingly irrelevant, thanks to social networks and smartphones.

7 FIXED SCHEDULES are disappearing. In 2008, according to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, 79% of employers allowed some workers to periodically change their arrival and departure time, up from 68% in 1998.

8 BUSINESS ATTIRE is no longer *de rigueur*. Casual Friday increasingly extends to the rest of the week.