

## Front Lines

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### Early Christmas

*Ellen C. Wells*

After asking in *buZZ!* about whether or not Christmas is starting earlier and earlier, I heard from two companies—one that grows evergreens and one that sells them.

Shannon Kuhrt of M&M Wintergreens in Cleveland, Ohio, said that after 20-plus years in the business, she can attest that the holiday has inched earlier and earlier each year. But Mother Nature isn't necessarily following that lead.

"With our products, you can't rush Mother Nature and greens can't be harvested without a proper frost," Shannon writes. "What happens then is it condenses the entire season into a tighter window each year and we have had to react with strategic moves to handle those changes. When I first started in this industry, the season didn't really start until after Thanksgiving and now we are starting to wrap up our season around that time."

And did you know that Thanksgiving is a whole week later than it was last year? Shannon says everyone is ordering on the same schedule as last year when Turkey Day was on the 22nd.

Vanessa Cooke-Case and her husband Scott of Fabulous Firs Christmas Tree Farm in Poughkeepsie, New York, work their Christmas tree farm full time, so they're "ALWAYS thinking of Christmas," she writes. After being lax on social media, the farm began posting to Facebook in earnest last year. This year, they began posting about the upcoming season back in August!

Writes Vanessa, "We polled our customers in August to gauge interest on opening before Thanksgiving, rather than our usual opening festival on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Mixed reviews. Many of our customers enjoy working off their turkey dinners the next day as they hunt for their perfect tree. We also get frequent requests to open late October/early November so families can come and take their annual family Christmas card photos; many others want to come the Wednesday before Thanksgiving because their children are home from college, or their grandchildren and children are in town for the holiday. This year we'll likely open Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and continue to welcome photographers and families to come by appointment to take photos on the farm."

I LOVE that Christmas photo opportunity! Gosh, Vanessa, I hope you ask a fee or sell cider or something to make some money from your effort.

"Thinking about Christmas 365 days a year has been rewarding; it helps us each day to stay grateful, connected and encouraged. Kind of what Christmas is all about, huh?" Great insight, Vanessa. **GP**