

Greetings from Evergreen Farm!

As was the case in 2005, heavy rains have affected the Christmas trees. The good news is that it gave most of the trees a boost in growth; hence we have a record number available. More good news: One of our trees was awarded Grand Champion at the Eastern States Exposition this past September! That was encouraging to us and our methods of shaping trees.

The bad news is that the same rains caused hundreds of trees to die because of oxygen deprivation and soil-born fungi. We hope more normal weather patterns return, as our soils are moist to begin with, having lots of clay. When excessive rain falls, unless the trees have well developed root systems, they are vulnerable. Such is the challenge of growing any crop!

Wildlife continues to thrive. While “tree shopping”, you may have noticed certain plants, besides the Christmas trees, that wildlife use. The red berries of winterberry or black alder (*Ilex verticillata*) provide bird food through the winter.

We had the joy of watching a hermit thrush spend several weeks in late winter behind the house feasting on the winterberries. He/she usually have migrated by this time, but this one decided the bush offered some eats worth staying for!

We have planted crab apples everywhere; by spring there are few apples left. We watched wild turkeys jumping up to snatch them from a tree! Beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*) thrives on the edge of the plantations – its nut is consumed in late summer by mice, chipmunks and others. Hawks and owls visit regularly to get their share of those animals.

In our growing human population, with related development, open space such as that here at Evergreen Farm provides refuge for all kinds of animals. We thank you both on their behalf and ours for supporting this beautiful land, and wish you peace for this season and throughout the new year.

Bill, Julie, our family and crew