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Homestead Tree Farm owners Nancy and Bill Stewart have found the secret to combining family life with earning a living. Two-year-old daughter Kate is glad their job allows for lots of kid-attention time.

Bill is a longtime Port Orchard resident. When he retired from his first career several years ago he decided to buy a twenty-acre tree farm. Bill and Nancy met at work. She was hired to help him sell all those trees. “These trees are like our babies,” said Nancy. “We’re so proud of them. We’re hardly a big tree farm. But we like to do it this way. We especially like the interaction with our customers. It’s more fun selling the trees ourselves than shipping them off in a truck,” she adds.

This time of year you’ll find Nancy, Bill and Kate at the Eagles Hall near the crossroads of Jackson and Salmonberry in Port Orchard. From Highway 16 take the Sedgwick exit and go east approximately two miles to Jackson Avenue and turn left. You’ll find the Eagles Hall one-half mile on the right. Look for the Homestead Trees sign and the lighted area.

“We’re especially family and kid oriented,” says Nancy. “Our trees are arranged so kids can run through them like a maze.” Kids can also visit with Santa on Saturdays and Sundays from 4-6 p.m. (Note – Santa won’t appear if it’s pouring rain – he has to be ready to deliver toys and can’t catch a cold.) Hot apple cider and candy canes are always provided though. The tree lot is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. until December 22. Nancy says, “You might even find us there on December 23 when we’re taking the tree lot apart.”

Stewarts offer six kinds of trees: Douglas fir, grand fir, white pine, Norwegian spruce, noble fir and Shasta fir. Shasta fir is a cousin of Noble and has a different shape with star shaped needles. The nobles are more rounded Nancy said. Sizes range from four to five feet up to twenty feet. Prices range from fifteen to fifty-five dollars and average sizes are four to eight feet, but if you need a taller tree I’m sure they’ll go to their farm and cut one for you. To contact the Stewarts in advance email them at [nstert@aol.com](mailto:nstert@aol.com).

Nancy and Bill grow their trees conservatively to protect the watershed. They clean and trim the weeds, grasses and Scots broom. They only fertilize once a year to green them up. When they’re not selling Christmas trees Nancy and Bill keep quite busy doing other things. They specialize in seasonal work, landscaping, heavy farm work and will trim and take down trees. In other words they can meet nearly any gardening need for you. Nancy uses materials gathered in their work to make handcrafted projects. Homestead Crafts items such as wreaths, greens, pinecone wreaths are her specialty. “We encompass so many things and it’s all seasonal,” Nancy says.

Homestead Trees provides the City of Port Orchard with their Christmas tree at the end of Bay Street in front of Mallory’s Frame Shop. Visitors to Port Orchard will also see Homestead Christmas Trees in many of the downtown and local businesses. Stewarts provide many of the trees for local charity events too.

“We started our family late in life – at 45 I had my first child,” Nancy says. Bill retired from television and had been living abroad and in Los Angeles most of the time returning home to Port Orchard as often as he could. But now our work is flexible and we are so happy to be able to live and work in our own community she explained. Nancy hopes you’ll visit their Christmas tree lot in Port Orchard and find a tree for your family.

While we’re talking about trees and things Christmassy don’t forget that the North Kitsap Horticulture kids have lots of poinsettias and wreaths for sale at both Kingston Junior High on West Kingston Road and North Kitsap High School on Hostmark Street. You can stop by during school hours and pick up your plants or wreaths. I bought four poinsettias myself last week.

Contact Peg with comments or questions at [gardenmentor@yahoo.com](mailto:gardenmentor@yahoo.com) or write her in care of this newspaper.