

Even a severe drought couldn't take the yuletide spirit away from Bill and Paula Jacobs. Scorching summer temperatures killed more than a quarter of the trees on the couple's tree farm in Owasso. But Bill Jacobs is still encouraged by the hundreds of families that showed up last weekend to pick out their evergreens. "Of course it rained on Saturday, but we had very big crowds on Sunday when things cleared up," said Bill Jacobs, co-owner of the Owasso Christmas Tree and Berry Farm at 11039 N. 29th East Ave. Adverse weather has only made growing Christmas trees tougher for the handful of farmers who continue the practice in the area. In the Tulsa area, only two farms are registered with the Oklahoma Christmas Tree Association, with another four small farms elsewhere in northeastern Oklahoma. More people are choosing to buy trees from big-box retailers or seasonal setups, and many old farmers are closing farms due to health issues. Jacobs said he will probably sell 5,000 to 6,000 trees this year, about 1,400 of which are grown on his farm. Only the Virginia pine species of evergreen are suitable to Oklahoma, so Jacobs has other varieties shipped in from Oregon, where cooler summer weather and more abundant rain makes growing trees much easier. Even in Oklahoma, Virginia pines are sturdy plants and have resisted past ice storms and record snows, but some plants just couldn't cope with months of 100-plus degree temperatures. "The sun just scorched them," Jacobs said. Local tree farms irrigate their plants, so lack of water wasn't an issue. Still, shoppers are rushing to the tree farm to reserve and chop down the trees. Hundreds of trees on the lot are already reserved, but Jacobs said there are still plenty left.

In Gore, the Cal2Homa Christmas Tree Farm is enjoying record crowds during its first two weeks of business. "We opened the Friday after Thanksgiving, and it was very busy," said owner Brian Batesole. Batesole and his wife grow trees on 2 1/2 acres of their 10-acre farm. The weather this year was kinder to him than other growers, especially those in the central and southern parts of the state. "We

only lost a few baby trees," he said. "But we lose a few every year." Batesole also brings in other popular varieties of trees, but he may need more. "These first two weekends of December are usually the busiest of the year," he said. Kyle Arnold 918-581-8380 kyle.arnold@tulsaworld.com SUBHEAD: Shoppers must act fast to snag their perfect Christmas tree christmas trees: growers cope after weather-related losses Original Print Headline: Farms try to meet tall orders Subscribe to Daily Headlines Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.