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# Christmas Tree Sales Recap

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*The 2024 Christmas tree sales season is completed. With that in mind, many growers may wonder how their sales season stacked up to other farms or previous years. Were tree sales up or down compared to 2023? Were there enough trees to match demand, or was there an excess at the end of the year? Anecdotally some growers in Michigan have reported decreased year over year tree sales and a softening market in 2024. Overall economic downturns, poor weather, and a very late Thanksgiving date all could have contributed to a decreased sales year. Other market forces of inflationary pressures and high customer debt may also have reduced demand. To better determine if this is an industry-wide trend or isolated situations, a grower survey was created to gather feedback from Christmas tree growers in the Great Lakes region. Subsequent grower phone interviews were also conducted.*

The grower survey consisted of 26 questions and was initially distributed in mid-January through the Michigan Christmas Tree Association member list. Soon after, the survey was posted on the Great Lakes Christmas Tree Facebook group and asked for grower participation comparing the 2024 and 2023 Christmas tree sales season. In total, 39 growers from 12 states and one grower from Canada responded to the survey comparing their Christmas tree sales from 2024 to 2023. The survey was divided into categories for wholesale, choose and cut, and retail lot sales to determine if different avenues of tree sales have differing experiences.

Combined results from the survey (Figure 1) comparing Christmas tree sales from 2024 to 2023 show a mostly positive report, with about 75% of respondents indicating sales either increased or stayed the same year over year. Parsing the results into different sales channels, begins to show a more nuanced story. For choose and cut sales (Figure 2), the vast majority (80%) sold the same or more trees in 2024. Focusing on specific changes in 2024, 60% of respondents sold at least 50 more trees, while 20% sold an additional 200 or more trees. Those with increased tree sales noted increase in supply of trees available to sell, improved advertising, and other nearby tree farms closing as reasons for selling

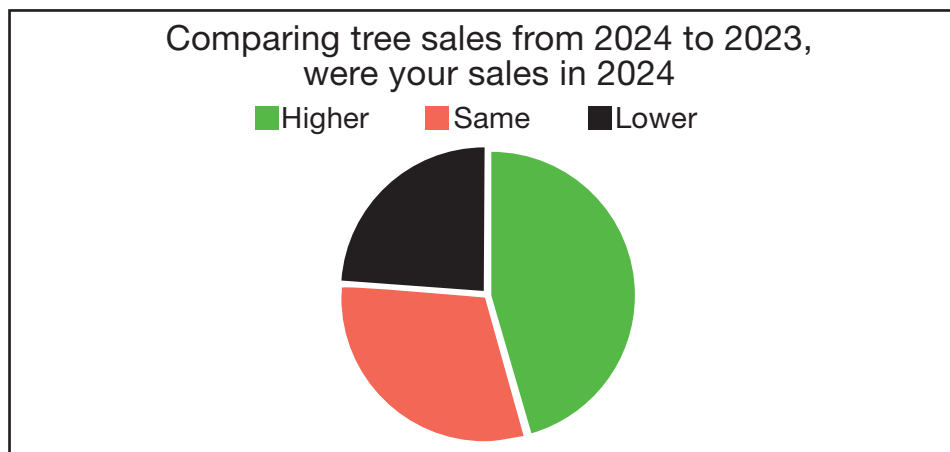


Figure 1 – Grower response comparing Christmas tree sales from 2024 to 2023.



Figure 2 – Choose and Cut grower response comparing tree sales from 2024 to 2023.

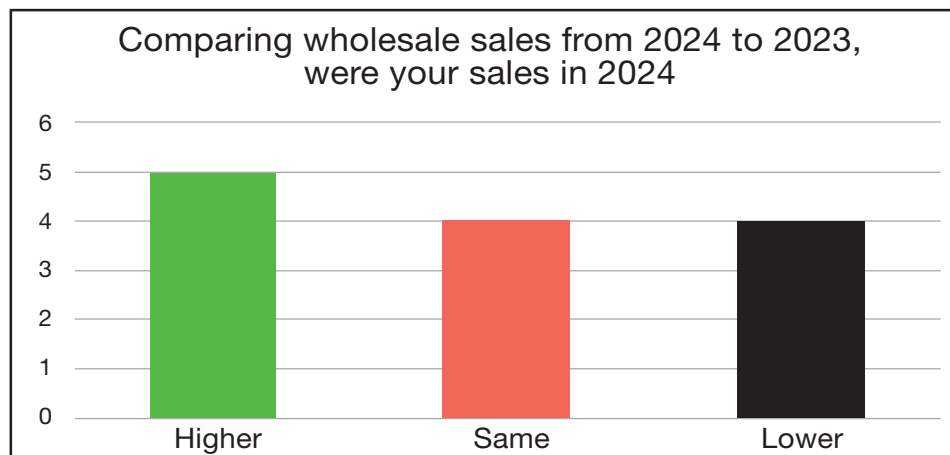
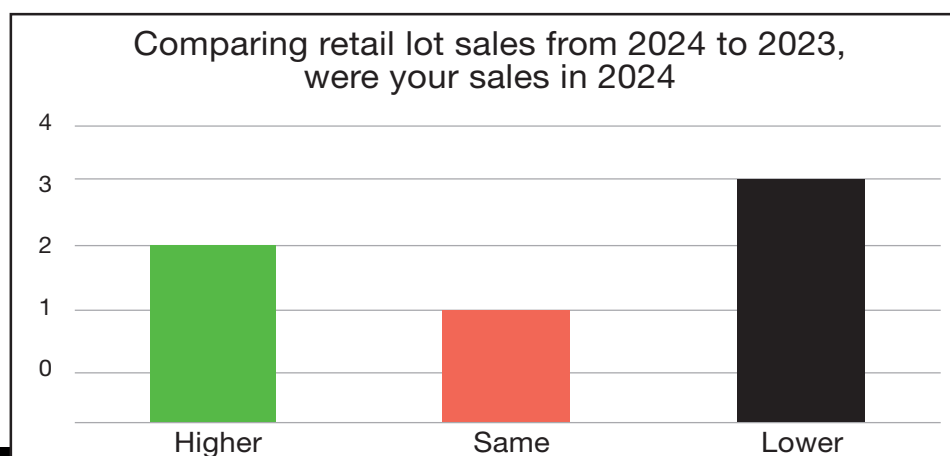


Figure 3 – Wholesale grower response comparing tree sales from 2024 to 2023.



more trees. For wholesale tree sales (Figure 3), results were split nearly equal between sales being the same, higher, or lower during 2024. Growers indicated that these results were directly tied to the available tree supply. Those that sold more had more trees available to sell, while those that sold fewer trees had a smaller 2024 supply. Reports from lot sales were very limited, with only 6 responses. With that said, a majority of respondents said tree lot sales had decreased in 2024 compared to 2023 (Figure 4). Lack of trees to sell and poor economic conditions were cited as reasons for the decline. With relatively few responses from this category, it is difficult to make a strong connection to the actual market.

To expand the information about the sales season beyond the grower survey, growers from around the region were interviewed. A summary of their responses about their 2024 sales season are listed below:

**Ohio:** Jane Neubauer from Sugar Pines Farm sells choose and cut as well as pre-cut trees. Jane reported 2024 as a great sales year and one of their best ever (Photo 1). They were able to sell out of trees quicker than any year before. Jane also reports other growers in northeast Ohio as having very high demand for trees. She mentioned it seems like lots of younger generations are coming to farms in the area to get the farm-experiences and fun activities (Photo 2), whether they purchase a pre-cut or cut their own tree in the end.

**Indiana:** Sarah and Justin James from Jolly Pines Tree Farm (Photo 3). Currently they exclusively sell trees via a tree lot as their choose and cut trees are not yet large enough to harvest. Sarah reported the number of trees sold was about the same from 2024 to 2023. However, they had to remain open several weeks longer to reach that same volume. She notes the general consensus from other Indiana growers is sales were moderately weaker in 2024.

**Michigan:** Dan Wahmhoff from Wahmhoff Farms sells trees through wholesale, choose and cut, and retail lots. He reports sales were down slightly from the choose and cut and retail lots, and attribute this to the very late Thanksgiving date, which essentially cost them a weekend of sales. Their wholesale sales were consistent year over year.

**Pennsylvania:** Beth Bossio from Quarter Pine Tree Farm (Photo 4). Their farm focuses mostly on choose and cut and precuts, but they have a few wholesale customers as well. Their choose and cut season was generally positive, overall numbers were down slightly compared to 2023 (Photo 5). A lack of trees, specifically tall trees, in their fields likely held back additional sales. In addition, the late Thanksgiving date greatly compacted the number of prime sale days. Beth also reported some customers requesting a more open, natural looking tree and they will make changes on some of their shearing



**Photo 1** – Sugar Pines Farm Choose and Cut. Credit: Jane Neubauer



**Photo 2** – Sugar Pines Farm Agri-Tourism Activities, Credit: Jane Neubauer



strategies in the year of sale to match those customer requests. Beth reported that some retail lots in the area ended the season with a large number of pre-cut trees left unsold.

**Wisconsin:** Andrea Barry from Cooks' Woods, which focuses primarily on choose and cut with a smaller portion in wholesale production. Choose and cut sales were down slightly from 2023, with around a couple hundred fewer sold. Interestingly, customer traffic was increased on the weekdays, but slower on weekends. Some customers may have wanted to avoid large crowds and came on less popular days.

Taken as a whole, the grower survey results indicate a relatively strong Christmas tree market. A key component of tree sales, whether up or down, was the availability of trees. For those farms that had more inventory to sell, they reported greater tree sales. Conversely, when tree inventory was reduced, tree sales followed. Choose and cut respondents had higher response rates of more tree sales, while retail lots were on the opposite side with a reduction in sales. From the grower survey, the market appears to be more limited by supply than demand. Grower phone interviews paint a more neutral

sales environment, indicating some softening in sales compared to 2023. A common theme was the very late Thanksgiving date reduced the number of prime sales days. Overall, the 2024 season may be viewed as somewhat unremarkable, with the post-COVID boom of tree demand waning, but moderately strong tree sales remain.

*Thank you to all the growers who participated in our survey and phone interviews!* 🌲



**Photo 4** – Quarter Pine Tree Farm, Credit Beth Russo



**Photo 3** – Jolly Pines Tree Farm, Sarah and Justin James, Credit Sarah James



**Photo 5** – Quarter Pine Tree Farm, Credit Beth Russo