



Agribusiness Development Corporation

Ag Notes

NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

O Christmas Tree: Helemano Farms Opens Up For The Holiday Season



(Above) Thousands of Christmas trees grown at Helemano Farms outside Wahiawa are ready for this holiday season.

(Photos below) Helemano Farms owner Aaron O' Brien examines Norfolk and Cypress trees on ADC-leased property.

Walking along endless rows of Christmas trees planted at Helemano Farms in Wahiawa, Christmas tree farm owner Aaron O'Brien recalled his father's intent in founding the family business back in 2002.



"When my Dad was a child in California, he and his family would go to a farm to pick out their Christmas trees," said O'Brien, whose family continues to own and operate Helemano Farms on a 40-acre parcel leased from the State Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).

"Dad always wanted to bring here that Mainland family tradition of the family choosing and cutting down a Christmas tree."

Years later, father Michael O'Brien decided Hawaii should have a Christmas tree farm for families. With an agricultural background and the help of his son, Aaron, Michael O'Brien began planting Norfolk pine trees in Whitmore Village in 2002. Michael ultimately planted more than 15,000 Norfolk trees, but passed away before seeing families at the farm. His family now runs Helemano Farms every year in his memory.

Located between the Whitmore Village community and the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station just outside Wahiawa, Helemano Farms is now in its 13th year of supplying locally-grown Christmas trees to customers. The family-owned company is also one of ADC's longest-

running tenants utilizing ag-designated lands in the Wahiawa area.



O'Brien said the tree farm traditionally opens for customers on Black Friday the day after Thanksgiving. But in compliance with health and safety directives related to COVID-19, the operation opened one week earlier on Nov. 20 to space out the customer demand with over 5,000 Christmas trees for sale this holiday season.

"We wanted to space out the customer flow as best as possible to encourage social distancing," said O'Brien, who noted the open-air setting will help with ventilation. "So instead of one customer service line, we'll have multiple lines to keep the customers distanced and separated from each other."

A recent tour of the Wahiawa tree farm shows four varieties of Christmas trees lined up in different stages of growth. To potentially avoid use of any major outside source of irrigation, the tree farm uses an on-site water catchment system and overnight condensation from the upper Wahiawa elevation to irrigate the trees.

"The Wahiawa area is based at the right height where the dew at night collects on the trees for part irrigation and the temperatures are cool enough during the day," O'Brien said.

Taking home a fresh tree straight from the Wahiawa farm means a longer shelf life for the holiday season. Customers have the option of selecting and purchasing Leyland Cypress, Norfolk Pine, Murray Cypress and Carolina Cypress trees.

"The traditional cypress Christmas tree with the pine needles last about 4-6 weeks," O'Brien said. "The longer branch Norfolk trees can last up to several months."

"It's a seasonal crop we produce for the holiday season, but obviously it's a year-round operation with year-round maintenance," O'Brien said of the pruning and other maintenance of the trees to ready them for sale. "Perhaps we don't sell food crops, but like other local farmers, we grow and sell local products. So please continue to buy local."

Helemano Farms is located at 1750 Whitmore Avenue. Their business hours are:

*Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays
Noon to Sunset*

*Saturdays and Sundays
10 a.m. to Sunset*

Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays

For more information, call (808) 622-4287 or go to the company website at www.helemanofarms.com.



Helemano Farms staff secure a purchased Christmas tree on a customer's vehicle to be taken home.

Security Improvements Continue Around Whitmore Area



Construction workers install a security fence along Uwalu Circle in Wahiawa to keep trespassers away from the nearby neighborhood.

ADC continues to make security improvements on and near its Whitmore properties.

ADC has been conducting routine enforcement sweeps on Uwalu Circle to address residents' concerns about criminal activity in the area. In addition to the sweeps, ADC hired a security firm to patrol the area and started construction of a security fence along Uwalu Circle to stop people from trespassing onto state property.

Construction of the fence is scheduled for completion by the end of December 2020.

On our other ADC properties, we have increased our security patrols and continue to remove abandoned vehicles via contracted towing company.

If the public sees suspicious activity on any of our properties, please contact 911 first. You can also call our ADC Wahiawa field office at (808) 622-6696, so we can follow-up.

Mahalo for your patience and cooperation!