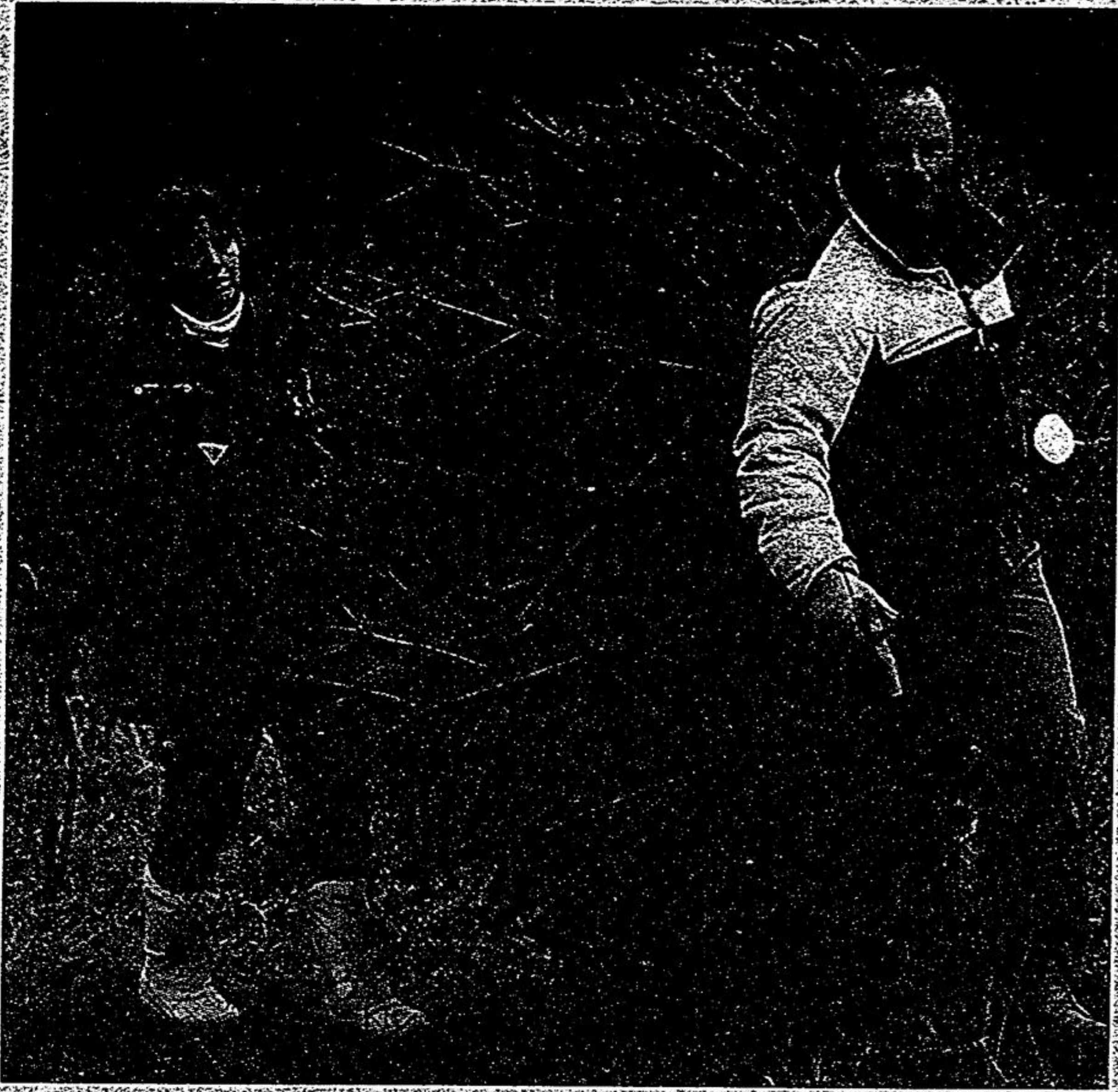


LEISURE



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Myles and Debbie Munn of Newmarket carry out their selection at Horton's Tree Farm, Magic Hill, just north of Stouffville on the Ninth Line Thursday.

When only real will do

Artificial trees just don't cut it for some families

BY MICHELE MCLEAN
CORRESPONDENT

Whether you're pining for a Scotch pine or looking for a Fraser fir, you'll find the perfect tree at a local tree farm.

For many people, choosing the right tree is based on tradition, while for others it's simply what looks best.

"Some come to buy a spruce tree no matter what you have," said Earl Grose of Vivian Plantation.

"That's the tree they grew up with. They like the aroma of a spruce tree."

Others will simply wander around among the trees and pick whatever looks best.

And, there is a large selection available including Scotch and white and red pines, balsam, Douglas, Fraser and Canaan firs, as well as white, Norway, northern and Colorado blue spruces.

Then there are the Christmas tree shoppers who will ask the tree farmers to recommend the best tree type.

"I recommend a fir tree because of the length of time it holds its needles," Grose said.

"Besides being a good tree, it's getting to be a popular choice now."

"I can't grow balsam fir fast enough," said Bryce Cleland of Cleland Christmas Trees, in Newmarket.

"They're selling faster than I can grow them."

He recommends either the Scotch pine or a balsam fir for holding its needles.

Last year he went to Florida after the Christmas tree-buying rush and left a still-decorated Scotch pine in the tree stand in the barn at his farm.

When he returned in April, the tree "looked as good as the day we had put it up in the barn."

The year before, he did the same thing with a balsam fir and had the same result.

"Neither one had a drop of water," he said.

"The Fraser fir is about as artificial looking as any tree you can get, without being artificial."

Murray Crone, of Crone's Tree Farm in Mount Albert, said spruce is still a popular choice, as well as his personal favourite.

"I like a spruce because it's traditional to this part of the country," Crone said, although he advises that it needs a lot of water.

Grose said people choose a Scotch pine Christmas tree less often nowadays, which is just as well since this type of evergreen is susceptible disease.

"We've been growing Scotch pine for so long in Ontario in the same areas that fungus diseases have developed to the point where it's now very difficult to grow a good Scotch pine," Grose said.

"We didn't use the proper rotation of

WHERE TO SWING AN AXE IN YORK REGION

Many tree farms also offer family fun, such as sleigh rides, cocoa and children's playgrounds

Richard Breslin, Maple, (416) 347-6988

Cleland Christmas Trees, Newmarket, (905) 836-7069

Crones Tree Farm, Mount Albert, (905) 473-2349

Drysdale Tree Farms, Ballantrae, (416) 444-9159

Forfar Estates, Ballantrae, (905) 640-2027

Horton Original Farm, Aurora, 1-800-420-7385

Horton Tree Farm, Stouffville, 1-800-420-7385

Island Lake Tree Farm, Ballantrae, (905) 473-3410

MacPherson Tree Farm, Ballantrae, (905) 473-6668 or (905) 473-3173

McClintock's Plantation, Newmarket, (905) 895-9974

Donald Penn, Cedar Valley, (905) 473-2286

Tufford's Trees, Ballantrae, (905) 640-2548

Vivian Plantation, Vivian, (905) 473-3537

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