



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

THIS CHRISTMAS, GO GREEN: SENATOR RITCHIE'S WEEKLY COLUMN

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For most people, nothing says Christmas like the smell of a fresh-cut evergreen tree. From Balsam Fir to Blue Spruce, the many varieties of Christmas trees in New York State aren't just a tradition during the holidays, they're also a major industry that has a \$14.7 million impact on our state's economy annually.

Today, there are more than 19,000 acres of Christmas trees grown on roughly 875 farms across our state, making New York 4th in the United States when it comes to the number of Christmas tree farms. Locally, there's no shortage of places where you can cut your own or pick out the perfect tree for your home. To locate a tree farm near you, visit the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York's website at www.christmastreesny.org. There, you'll be able to search for farms by zip code and find information on other things—like New York tree varieties, tree care, how to properly recycle your tree and more.

As Chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, I've been working in recent years to support the Christmas tree industry and its hardworking farmers. This year, I fought for vital funding to help the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York promote locally grown trees and evergreen products. This funding is helping to teach consumers about the benefits of buying local, which include having a tree that stays fresher

longer and reducing fuel consumptions and emissions, as trees grown here in New York don't have to travel as far to be sold. Funding is also helping Upstate Christmas tree farmers expand into New York City markets, where consumers are increasingly looking to buy products that are locally grown.

In addition to fighting for funding to support Christmas tree growers, I also cosponsor a new legislation that would establish a statewide, "Go Green" weekend. This measure would designate one weekend a year in early December where all evergreen products—including trees, wreaths, garland and more—would be exempt from New York State sales tax.

If a fragrant, fresh tree, wreath or other evergreen product is what you're "pinning" for this holiday season, I encourage you to "shop local" and support New York State's Christmas tree growers. For more information, please visit www.christmastreesny.org