

Bedrock Tree Farm

The Scent of the Season

by Dale Rappaneau Jr.

Back in 1996, after the North Cape oil spill, Tom and Angie Geary, the husband & wife duo behind Wakefield's Bedrock Farm, planted Christmas trees across 12 acres. Tom, a full-time lobsterman, thought the trees would help supplement the family's income: "For my first 10 years, lobstering had been great. It was a really healthy, rewarding way to make a living, but since 1996, inshore lobstering has dramatically changed for the worse." So the trees became Tom's next project.

The initial costs for opening the tree farm were excessive, to say the least. "It's all cash out of pocket," Tom said. "You don't go to a bank and say, 'I want to plant Christmas trees.'" More challenging still was the work, which required Tom to clear the land, plant the trees, care for them, shape them and then replant them, each consecutive year. "It's basically a full-time job with part-time pay."

All that work eventually caught up with Tom, who some years ago took a break from replanting Christmas trees. This lapse of not replanting trees for a few years led to their current limited supply of trees over 6-feet tall. On top of that, "Sandy hit in the late fall of last year, giving us a really heavy dose of salty air and a major hard winter and a wet spring," Tom said, which "combined with, right now, what I consider to be extreme drought. It kind of gave us a good kick in the [rear]." According to Tom, though, this is the last year in which Bedrock Farm has to "downplay" their Christmas trees, as that lapse ends after this coming winter season.

For other tree farms, this kind of gap in ability to produce trees would be devastating, but for Bedrock Farm, their award-winning fir needle candles keep the customers coming back.

"People used to call us up and say their tree lost its scent. Some trees have a lot of scent and some don't, it's the nature of the tree. So I told them to scratch the branches or knock the bark. Get the sap flowing, that's where the scent comes from. Finally, I told people, just buy a scented fir needle candle."



At first, Tom and Angie sold traditional Christmas tree candles made by other companies. The candles, Tom said, were okay, but nothing really extravagant or special, so they started thinking about alternatives.

"I'd come in from shearing and my arms would be covered in sap," he said. "I'd scrape my arms and get this ball of sap that smelled incredible, so we started experimenting using the actual sap in candles." After months of trying different things, Angie - "the key imagination involved," Tom said - came up with a process in which fir needles were ground to powder and then infused into a candle. "That's the most authentic thing we came up with," he said.

And most authentic it certainly is: Angie and Tom's fir needle candle won first place in the Best New Product category at the New England Made show. Now, it's sold in more than 275 stores across the New England region - "and it's growing daily," Tom said. "It was totally unexpected and a huge surprise." More importantly, the candle has become "the forefront of our business operations," he said, adding that the award "just started busting the doors down for us."

Bedrock Farm's candles also include a wooden wick - something that Tom considers note-worthy in itself - and they have included the same award-winning fir needle process in other products, such as soaps.

Individuals interested in purchasing one of these amazing candles, or learning more about the creative individuals behind them, should visit BedrockTreeFarm.com.