



# Carving Out a Living on the Land

Lessons in Resourcefulness and Craft  
from an Unusual Christmas Tree Farm

Emmet Van Driesche

Gardening / Holiday Crafts / Sustainable Agriculture

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**Media contact:**

[publicity@chelseagreen.com](mailto:publicity@chelseagreen.com)

**US event contact:**

[jstewart@chelseagreen.com](mailto:jstewart@chelseagreen.com)

**UK event contact:**

[rbaldwin@chelseagreen.com](mailto:rbaldwin@chelseagreen.com)



**On this unique New England farm, learning when to let nature take the lead is key to carving out a living.**

**W**hen he first envisioned becoming a farmer, Emmet Van Driesche never imagined his main crop would be Christmas trees. Nor did he imagine that this plot of land could defy the standard grid of perfectly sheared trees of a modern tree farm, and instead, be shaped by a sustainable and ecologically-friendly method that requires a watchful eye and careful tending while letting nature take the lead. *Carving Out a Living on the Land* shares how Van Driesche and his wife took advantage of unexpected opportunities and leveraged new and old skills to piece together a living from what may be this country's oldest farm of its kind, the Pieropan Christmas Tree Farm.

From coppicing trees to gathering greens for wreath-making, from spoon carving to scything, *Carving Out a Living on the Land* proves that to start your land-based venture, flexibility, creativity and understanding are key to using your land optimally, whether it's a rocky ledge or ditch, or a patch of trees too small to log. You can lease instead of buy; build flexible, temporary structures rather than sink money into permanent ones; or take over an existing operation rather than start from scratch. What matters most are your unique circumstances, talents, and interests, which when combined with what the land is exuberantly capable of producing, can create a meaningful and successful farming life.

Whether you are an armchair farmer with dreams of leaving the city and buying an acre of land in the country, or are already setting out on your own agricultural pursuits, *Carving Out a Living On the Land* offers an invaluable look into the business of modern small-scale sustainable agriculture:

- Offers valuable insight from a young farmer with ten years of experience into creating a sustainable business.
- Shares guideposts for how to work with the land rather than just taking from it.
- Since 1955, the farm has always been chemical-free, using traditional stump-culture method (coppicing) that provides a sustainable—and exuberantly abundant—natural alternative to conventional tree farms.
- A self-taught wood-carver, in addition to trees, wreaths, and festive greens, Emmet produces handmade wooden spoons for practical every-day and holiday decorative use.

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**Author Availability:** Massachusetts, or by phone or arrangement

**To request a review copy or author interview, please contact:** Steven Pomije: (802) 295-6300 ext. 129, or [spomije@chelseagreen.com](mailto:spomije@chelseagreen.com)



**Emmet Van Driesche** and his wife Cecilia have been operating the Pieropan Christmas Tree Farm over the past decade, which supplies trees, greens, wreaths and carved goods to customers and businesses throughout the region. *Carving Out a Living on the Land* is his first book. Find out more at [pieropantrees.com](http://pieropantrees.com). He lives in Western Massachusetts.

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