



# Pine Meadows Tree Farm

Chilliwack BC



# The snowball effect

**“Actually what happened was, I had just bought this place, and I was sitting in the staff room. I asked one of my colleagues, ‘If you had two acres to plant full of something right now, what would it be?’ And he said, ‘Christmas trees,’ just like that.”**

And so, just like that, Pine Meadows Tree Farms was born. But it wasn't quite so simple, or so easy.

In 1970, Arthur Loewen received his first 2,000 Christmas tree seedlings and planted them in just over an acre of land. Not long after, 1,400 of them died. Arthur remarks, “Well, I'm not a quitter; so the next year, I got more trees, and I replanted.”

After those first rocky attempts at growing Scotch pine, Arthur's farm, and his trees, began to thrive. By the early 1980s, he was renting 30 acres of land in addition to the seven acres he already owned. “By 1986, we bought land next door, and it just snowballed,” he adds. “We just kept on growing more trees and more trees, and then in 1994, we bought another 40 acres of land.”

Although the rapid expansion of Arthur's operation is impressive unto itself, it is all the more astonishing given that, during this time, he continued to work fulltime as a math teacher at Hatzic Secondary School until his retirement in June 1999. “I looked forward to going to school and that's why I kept teaching,” he remarks. “I was not willing to give it up because I thoroughly enjoyed meeting the kids and interacting with them. It was a lot of fun.”

Even in the last few years, Pine Meadows has

continued to grow. In 1998, Arthur's youngest son, Tim Loewen, graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degree in Agriculture Business Management. Though he had previously been working on his uncle's grain farm, Tim decided that he wanted to take over Pine Meadows instead. “In 1998, I had been doing less planting because I had anticipated retiring in 1999,” Arthur recalls. “But Tim said, ‘Dad, I want to take over the farm’, and so we just started planting all over again.”

In 1999, following Tim's decision, the Loewens' operation snowballed even further when they bought a nearby greenhouse operation with 20 adjacent acres of farmland. The Loewens now own 85 acres and lease another 15. Two-thirds of their business is nursery stock and the other third is Christmas trees. “We're busy all year round,” Arthur reports.

Like his son, Tim, Arthur's interest in agriculture was sparked by having grown up on a farm. In fact, Arthur so enjoyed this experience that he wanted something similar for his own children. “I love the outdoors and working with plants,” he explains. “I figured, I grew up on a farm, I want my boys to grow up on a farm.”

According to Arthur, one of the biggest advantages of farm life is that it focuses your family. All three of Arthur's sons have been involved in the farm over the years, as has Arthur's wife, Lois. He comments, “It gives you time together, things you can do together as a family. And it's not only farm work. The kids picked up the idea that you can do things with your time that don't cost you money, but are beneficial and give you good exercise. We did a lot of hiking in the mountains and that type of thing.”

When asked how his way of life is different now that he is farming fulltime rather than teaching fulltime, Arthur replies, “I'm healthier now for one. I've lost more weight, and I'm a lot stronger. I feel a lot better. When you hustle 100-pound trees each day, somehow your body adapts to it.” He adds, “Also, when you're farming fulltime, there's never an end of work. But you can also always take off when you want. Now, time is my own. I can do with it what I want, when I want.” Despite these differences, however, one thing certainly hasn't changed. Although Arthur may be retired, he certainly isn't showing any signs of slowing down. “With my son taking over, I'm going to be involved here for a long time,” he smiles.

## FARM FACTS

**Employed –**

*seasonal: 4*

*year-round: 3*

**Gross Farm Sales –**

*over \$250,000*

**Land Owned –**

*85 acres*

**Land Leased –**

*15 acres*