

Fake Christmas trees can be money-savers



By **TREVOR DAVIS** World Staff Writer

11/25/2008

Last Modified: 11/25/2008 4:10 AM

Faux trees could close the sales gap on their live counterparts this year.

Local artificial tree retailers, hoping to capitalize on the tight economy, say fake trees save money in the long run.

Last year, sales of artificial Christmas trees increased 46.6 percent from the previous year, according to the Chesterfield, Mo.-based National Christmas Tree Association. Fake trees were purchased in 17.4 million households last year, compared with 31 million households buying real trees.

Fake trees are selling well so far at Hobby Lobby, said William Smith, assistant manager of the chain's store at 5130 S. Harvard Ave.

Artificial Christmas trees, which can sell for hundreds of dollars, are displayed at a Lowe's store. Tulsa World file

"People are buying them quicker now than last year," Smith said. "A lot of them are saying it's just time for a new tree."

At Seasonal Concepts, the pace of winter holiday sales is up about 10 percent from last year, said store manager David Marchewka, adding that he tells customers about the benefits of artificial trees, including long-term savings.

The store offers a 7-foot-6-inch artificial tree starting at about \$100.

"With the prices of some real trees in the neighborhood of \$100 a pop, the main advantage of an artificial tree is that it will save money and last," Marchewka said. "You don't have to keep replacing the tree every year."

Artificial trees are easy to care for, he said, noting, "You don't have to worry about the tree having water all the time."

Seasonal Concepts tries to keep artificial trees out of the landfills, Marchewka said. The store reuses old trees and gives donated ones to low-income families.

Those who miss the real-tree scent can buy a spray to apply on fake trees, he said.

For a more lavish celebration, artificial trees sell for as much as \$800 at Seasonal Concepts, Marchewka said.

"The upper-end trees are so pretty, you don't even have to decorate them," he said, adding that some come with pine cones.

There are even purple, gold and upside-down trees, Marchewka said. One replaces the tree's pole with a bubble-filled tank that changes colors. It sells for \$399. A 2-foot tree made of feathers is aimed at children.

At the Holiday Lights store, LED lights for artificial trees are hot sellers, store manager Christina Walton said. The lights are more efficient and last longer than incandescent bulbs.

"It takes 80 percent less electricity, so you don't have to worry about blowing any breakers," Walton said.

Trevor Davis 581-8387

trevor.davis@tulsaworld.com