

Tree farmer is the prince of pine

By JAN HOGAN
VIEW STAFF WRITER

He traded in the palm trees of Hawaii for the pine trees of Nevada. Now Stephen Pingree, a resident of Summerlin, is making those pines pay off.

His company, Amargosa Pine Growers, a division of Farm Road LLC, provides drought-tolerant trees for landscaping projects -- everything from commercial centers to highway berms to neighborhood developments.

D & K Landscape, 4021 E. Patrick Lane, is a customer. Kristi Atkinson, purchasing agent for the company, ordered about 30 trees from APG for a housing development near Decatur Boulevard and Warm Springs Road.

"It was cost effective for us because it was B and B -- bag and burlap," she said. "And anything grown here is going to establish itself a little easier."

Pingree also has supplied Star Nursery. Purchasing agent Steve Cutts said Star Nursery used California growers



before, but now also gets products from APG.

"We went out there to look at his operation," he said. "It was pretty impressive."

Pingree has plenty of business experience. He spent more than 30 years as a real estate broker, and was a trial lawyer and criminal tax defense attorney. He also owned a women's clothing store, an art gallery and an Internet business.

He and his wife, Cora, a physical fitness trainer, live near Summerlin Hospital. They kept their home in the islands, but visit it only about once every two months.

APG's tree farm is in Amargossa Valley, an area about 100 miles north of Las Vegas that has a natural aquifer beneath it. Pingree eventually bought 300 acres at the site. The land languished as Pingree considered exactly what to do with it.

"Then I found out Nevada had what's essentially a 'use it or lose it' water permitting system," Pingree said.

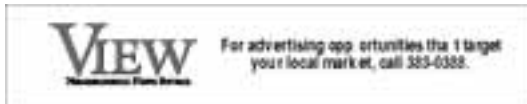
So he decided to grow trees to sell on the wholesale



Stephen Pingree of Summerlin stands by one of 20 Mondell pines recently planted at The Springs Preserve. Pingree owns Amargosa Pine Growers, which was contracted to plant the 6-year-old trees around the Preserve's gardens. Sara Tramiel/View



Special to ViewAmargosa Pine Growers owner Stephen Pingree stands by one of the trees at his farm in Amargossa Valley, an area about 100 miles north of Las Vegas that has a natural aquifer.



market. Pingree put in an irrigation system, planted trees and built two greenhouses for seedlings. The hardy pines, native to Afghanistan, achieve a 8- to 12-foot height in four to five years. They can grow to 60 feet high.

Last fall, some of the 70,000 trees in APG's inventory were deemed ready for harvest. Some went to the Springs Preserve to help dress the site.

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"We could have gotten them from California, but here's a local grower," said Russ Harrison, horticultural service supervisor for the Springs Preserve. "The trees are already used to the heat and soil conditions, so there's a better chance of survival."