



Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

January 2020

Special points of interest:

◆ Upcoming Meetings

The Summer Meeting of the NHVTCTA will be held on Saturday, June 27, 2020, at Carl Szych's farm in Newport, Vermont.

◆ Future Meeting Sites

The NHVTCTA is always looking for possible sites to hold our Summer and Fall meetings. You don't have to have the perfect farm: there's no such thing, and besides, any "issues" on your farm just give the group more to talk about and learn about. We plan the agenda planning and help with the logistics; all you need is a willingness to host your fellow farmers for a day.

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Winter Meeting at Vermont Farm Show

The 2020 Winter Meeting of the New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association will be held on Tuesday, January 28, at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds in Essex Junction, Vt., in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show.

There will be the annual tree display/competition, so if you are able, please bring a tree to the meeting. Even if it's just your own tree that you just took out of your living room, it's nice to have some real Christmas trees greet attendees as they come through the door.

Following the morning business meeting, we will hold our annual "Sales and Marketing Update" roundtable. This is always a valuable time to learn about and share what trends are being seen when it comes to marketing and selling Christmas trees, whether it's wholesale, retail, or choose-and-cut.

We'll hear from Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Anson Tebbetts, as well as from Marsha Gray with the National Christmas Tree Promotion Board.

Jeff Taylor, new president of our association, will discuss pesticide regulations and the recent controversy around Roundup.

After lunch, we'll have a panel discussion on the subject of planting, including factors such as stump removal, ground prep, and fertilization.

Registration for the meeting (without a guaranteed meal) is available onsite if you have not already sent in your registration form. Contact Jim Horst for more information at (802) 447-0660.



NCTA Update

Following is a look at some of the recent activities of the National Christmas Tree Association.

Voice of the Industry: During the 2020 Christmas season NCTA handled over 600 emails and calls from media outlets, conducting interviews by phone, on camera and by email. Many of the media

outlets required multiple emails or phone calls to provide them with the information they were seeking. A significant amount of media stories on Christmas trees during the 2019 season were influenced by or included quotes from NCTA. The topics of media interest in 2019 included; the

Continued on page 6

President's Message

Happy Start to the 2020 Season!

As I sit here and gaze through the window upon the freshly fallen, light snow, I can't help but think this would have been a welcomed alternative to the mud, then deep snow we received during the harvest.

Unlike the 2018 season when our northern region farms were challenged trying to get their trees out because of the deep snows and some growers couldn't, the southern farms had a taste of that frustration during the 2019 harvest. On our choose and cut farm the 2+ foot snowfall just after Thanksgiving, required all of the trees to be brushed off and dug out, many of which had been pre-tagged and paid for. Two feet of snow on the trees, once brushed off results in 3 feet of snow between the rows which gets trampled and packed by customers making it even more difficult to dig out. Fortunately, we had a young crew (except myself) of strong and ambitious workers to bail us out otherwise the trees would still be in the field.

Overall however, 2019 was a successful year for most of us. Talking with some of our member

growers, the wholesale market essentially sold out with some growers stating they could have sold twice as many trees if they had the product. Because Thanksgiving weekend was so late many trees were sold two weeks before which put some pressure on tree availability in some local areas. Choose and cut and retail sales were apparently good in spite of the snows in the southern regions.

I hope to see all of you at the Winter meeting on January 28th at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds in Essex Jct. Our agenda includes an update from Anson Tebetts, Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, Sales and Marketing, updates and an informative discussion on various cultural techniques related to soils, planting and stump management.

I urge all of you to renew your membership for 2020 and I look forward to working with the members and Board of Directors to provide interesting and educational programs that can benefit your farms.

*Best to all,
Jeff Taylor, President*



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



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President	Jeff Taylor	taylortreepeople@aol.com
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Copies of the Association bylaws and policies are available to members at any time by contacting the Executive Secretary.

2020 Tree Line Publication Schedule

Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline
January	—
June	June 5
September	Sept. 4

Christmas Tree Promotion Board Update

Marsha Gray with the National Christmas Tree Promotion Board will be onhand at our Winter meeting to provide a full update on the Promotion Board's recent activities, but here are a few recent highlights.

On November 22, real Christmas trees were featured on The Kelly Clarkson Show, a nationally-syndicated daytime program which was just renewed by NBC Universal for a second season. Christmas tree growers George and Ryan Richardson shared the campaign key messages with Kelly while her celebrity guests went "shopping" for their real own Christmas trees on the set, which featured more than a

dozen fresh trees displayed like a retail lot. The broadcast itself was watched by more than 1 million viewers across the country. The segment was also posted to the show social media accounts, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, for an additional reach of more than 1.3 million, bringing the total reach of The Kelly Clarkson Show integration to more than 2.3 million. Of course, the segment was also shared on the "It's Christmas. Keep it Real." social media pages as well.

The 2019 Real Trees, Real Memories photo contest was held, featuring four weekly \$250 prizes and a grand prize of

\$1,000 yet to come. This contest was run in cooperation with Red Tricycle, an on-line family activity resource, and all Christmas tree retailers could encourage their customers to enter.

Finally, though the Promotion Board claimed no credit, the industry benefitted from the timely release of a new song by pop singer Taylor Swift called "Christmas Tree Farm," which referenced her childhood growing up on a Christmas tree farm. Following USDA rules, the Board reached out to Swift's publicist within hours of the debut of the song and received permission to share it on the Board's social media platforms.



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Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-2	
Balsam-Fraser Hybrids: Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-2	
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Rogers Mtn.) Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-2	
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Ayers) Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-2	
Canaan Fir: West Virginia Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-2	
Canaan Fir: West Virginia Seed Source	Spring 2020	2-1	
Mystery Tree: Late-Breaking Fraser Fir	Spring 2020	2-2	
Veitchii-Mtn. Balsam Hybrids: Limit 100/Customer	Spring 2020	2-2	
Korean-Mtn. Balsam Hybrids: Limit 100/Customer	Spring 2020	2-2	
Roan Mtn. Fraser-Mtn. Balsam Hybrids: Limit 200	Spring 2020	2-2	
New River Fraser-Mtn. Balsam Hybrids: Limit 200	Spring 2020	2-2	

Controlling Cones in Fraser Fir

The 14th International Christmas Tree Research and Extension Conference 2019 was held in Quebec City last August, bringing together Christmas tree researchers and growers from around the world. The proceedings of the conference are available online (www.iufro.org/fileadmin/material/publications/proceedings-archive/20209-ctre-proceedings-19.pdf) and there's a wealth of interesting information included. It caught my attention that three different presentations focused on the subject of controlling coning in Fraser fir based on research conducted in North Carolina, Quebec, and Michigan. Following are the abstracts/poster presentations from these research projects.

Controlling coning in Fraser fir with plant growth regulators

B. Cregg, D. Ellison & J. O'Donnell

Michigan State University

Early cone production of Fraser fir trees is a major concern for Christmas trees growers. Individual Fraser fir trees can produce hundreds of cones and

growers have reported over 1,000 cones on large trees. Fir cones disintegrate in the fall leaving unsightly stalks that reduce the salability of trees.

Presently, growers remove cones using picking crews, which is a major labor expense. In spring 2016, we installed field trials at four cooperating farms in Michigan (Allegan, Horton, Manton, and Sidney). Trees in each plantation were 1.0-1.7 m tall at the time of initial treatment application and therefore approaching the age when Fraser fir trees in Michigan typically begin to produce cones. At each farm, we applied treatments to six replicate 10-tree row plots (60 trees per treatment at each location). The treatments included three rates of soil-applied paclobutrazol, foliar applied paclobutrazol, and an untreated control. At the Allegan farm, which had the highest rate of coning, application of paclobutrazol reduced coning by up to 40% in 2018 and by 22% in 2019. At the remaining farms, paclobutrazol application reduced coning by an average of 60% in 2018 and 2019. In addition to reducing coning, pa-

clobutrazol reduced shoot extension by 21% in 2017 and by 16% in 2018. Foliar nitrogen increased from 1.7% on the untreated control trees to 2.0% for trees treated with the high rate of paclobutrazol.

Evaluation of Fraser fir cone production control methods

É. Lemaire

Institut Québécois du développement de l'horticulture ornementale (IQDHO)

The production of Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) is gaining momentum in Quebec (Canada). This species is more susceptible than the balsam fir (*A. balsamea*) to seed overproduction. The current practice of removing cones manually is considerably expensive. With the aim of finding a solution to this problem, a project was set up in 2016 to test two approaches to control cones chemically in *Abies fraseri* plantations in Quebec. The first approach consisted of attempting to inhibit the formation of female flowers (cones) and promote the development of vegetative buds by using growth regulator the first year of the cycle. Four growth regulators (Apogee, MaxCell, Fruitone and Bonzi) applied at the initiation or at the end of bud differentiation by foliar spraying or by trunk injection was tested. Compared to the control, none of the products, regardless of the timing or method of application, significantly reduced the number of cones on the trees in the two years following the treatment (2017-2018).

The second approach tested consisted of destroying the cones at the very beginning of their development in the spring of the second year of the cycle. Eight treatments (Water Control, Sulfur Lime,

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Controlling Cones in Fraser Fir (continued)

Ethrel, Ag-Surf, Finalsan Pro, LeafShield, citrus solvent, Fruitone) that were applied at the beginning of the development of the cones, before the bud burst, was tested. Finalsan Pro (ammonium soaps of fatty acids) has been the most effective product for rapidly stopping cone development, up to 100% on some trees. However, the results were variables depending of the coverage, the atrophic cones remained attached to the trees and the product caused phytotoxicity on the trees at one of the two test sites. For the moment, the results obtained in Quebec environmental settings do not allow to issue recommendations to Quebec Fraser fir growers as to inhibit the development of cones or to abort them without phytotoxicity. Further work is needed to develop the method, including the timing, the method, the volume and the rate of application.

Update: Fraser fir cone control research in NC

J. Owen

North Carolina State University

After seven years of Fraser fir cone control research in NC, efforts have narrowed to using chemical pruning agents to kill tender emerged cones in the spring. Of more than twenty products tested, herbicidal soaps (fatty acid/alcohols) seemed to be the most effective at killing immature cones. Killed immature cones shrink as they dry to become small persistent brown cones. Additional rate and sprayer application work has been conducted



Teresa Sikora/Wikipedia

with two organic herbicides, Axxe (ammoniated pelargonic salts) and Scythe (a fatty acid) over the last two years. Initial testing was conducted using manual backpack sprayers. Recent rate and timing studies have been conducted with high pressure hose sprayers. Both herbicides have the potential to injure new growth. Used at the right time – after all cones have

broken bud, but before any foliage buds break, even the highest rates of Axxe were used safely. In NC, applications of Scythe have been prone to varying degrees of foliage injury particularly with the onset of foliage bud break. Evaluation of 2019 cone control studies should provide information needed to finalize treatment recommendations.



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NCTA Update (continued)

Continued from page 1

“shortage,” prices, Millennials interest in real Christmas trees, the environmental impact of real vs. fake trees, the Christmas tree business, recycling Christmas trees, bugs in Christmas trees, mold, allergies fires, pet issues resulting from a real Christmas tree and other unique questions. Many of the reporters who contacted NCTA were focused on presenting information negative to the industry and real trees, we were able to turn many of them around to positive stories.

Tree Locator: NCTA’s tree locator is a very active site. During the 2019 season more than 750,000 consumers visited the locator to find where to purchase their Christmas tree.

Trees for Troops: Thank you, thank you! Your support for our program again this year made 2019 a huge success. Because of your financial support, tree donations and very importantly – your volunteer time, we were able to deliver 18,636 Real Christmas trees this year to US military members and their families! **[A tremendous 538 of those trees were donated by growers in New Hampshire and Vermont—thanks to all who contributed!]** We went to a record breaking 79 military bases in the US, Guam and Afghanistan. Over the past 15 years, with your donations, sponsorships and support we have delivered a total of 243,955 Real Christmas Trees!

White House Christmas Tree: NCTA 2019 Grand Champion

Grower Larry Snyder, of Mahantongo Valley Farms, Pitman, Pennsylvania delivered the official White House Christmas tree to the First Lady on November 25th. The presentation of the White House tree is the single largest agricultural promotion event, seen by millions of people worldwide.

New Tree and Wreath Contest Rules in place for 2020: It is important that everyone involved in state and regional tree and wreath contests understand the new rules for NCTA’s National contest. The new rule requires that all growers who enter the National contest “shall be ‘Members in Good Standing’ of the

NCTA and their respective affiliated chartered association at the time of affiliated/state contest to be eligible to enter the NCTA contest.” All entrants to the state and regional contest need to be informed of this rule before that contest is held so they can ensure their NCTA membership is current at that time to maintain their eligibility for the National contest. It will no longer be permissible to compete in the National contest by joining NCTA right before the National contest.

65th Anniversary of NCTA 2020 is the 65th anniversary of NCTA. We have adopted a special addition to our logo for the year to communicate the 65th anniversary to the industry and celebrate achieving this mile-

stone. It would not have been possible without the leaders who guided the organization and the members who supported it. NCTA fills a unique and critical role as the advocacy organization of the farm-grown Christmas tree industry, leading the public policy/governmental affairs and serving as the “voice” of the industry.

NCTA Plans for 2020: NCTA’s Executive Committee has completed its plans for 2020. In the upcoming year NCTA will implement a social media campaign to proactively promote real Christmas trees and distribute accurate information. The full NCTA Board will meet July 23, 2020 at Dull’s Tree farm in Indiana in conjunction with the MACT meeting that will also be hosted at the Dull’s farm. The name of NCTA’s magazine will be updated to the *National Christmas Tree Journal* to give the name of our publication a better fit with the name of the association and avoid confusion with the fake tree industry’s fake association. A 5-year agreement for continued management of NCTA by Tim O’Connor and Associates was completed; this continuity is highly valuable.

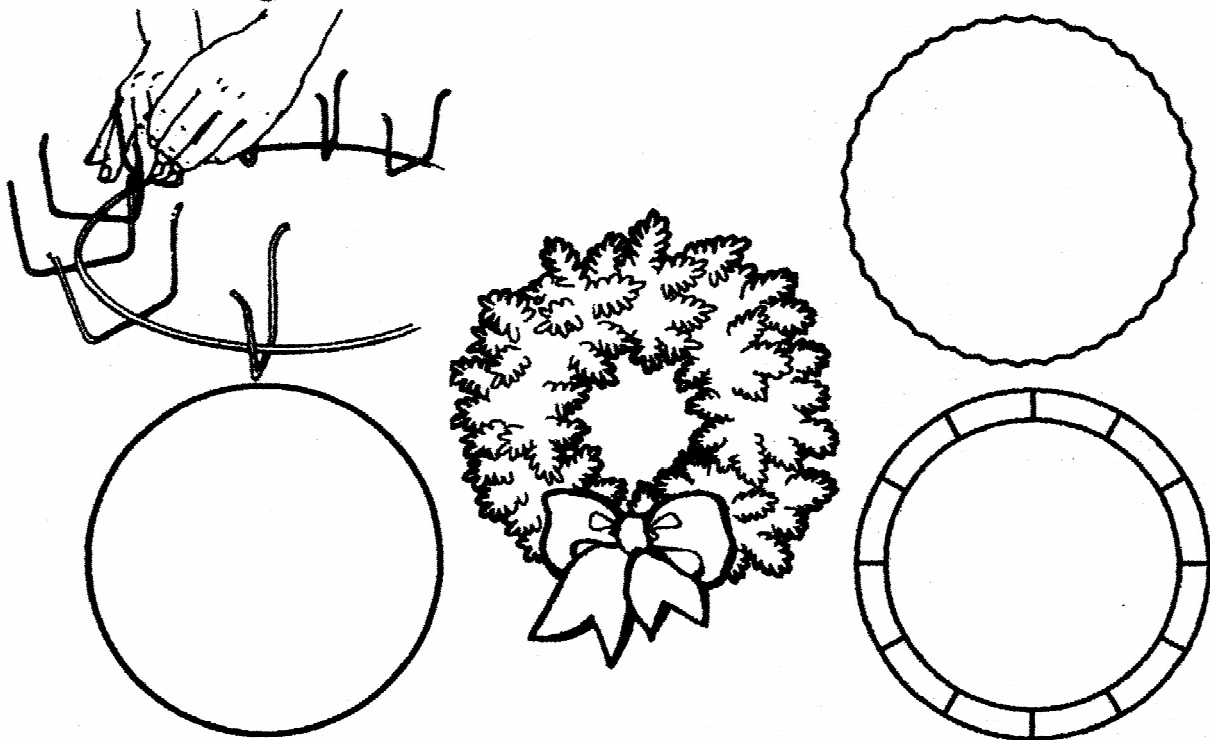
Renew Your NCTA Membership for 2020: Its time to renew your NCTA membership for 2020. Renewal mailings have been sent to all members and former members. It is important that every member renews their membership each year for NCTA to be successful. Recruit your fellow growers to join too.



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Free Tool to Help With Leasing Land

Following is an excerpt from an article by Keith Whitcomb that appeared in The Rutland Herald and The Times Argus about a free resource that members might find valuable when it comes to leasing land.

It's not clear how many farmers know about it, but the Vermont Law School is adding to a toolkit aimed at removing the confusion and mystery surrounding the legal side of farmland management.

The Farmland Access Legal Toolkit has been available to farmers and landowners across the country for about a year now, said Emily Spiegel, assistant professor of law at the Vermont Law

School. On Thursday, the school, through its Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, announced a new tool for the kit, the Farm Lease Builder.

All of the resources in the kit, including the Farm Lease Builder, are free, said Spiegel in an interview on Monday. While previous tools were largely informational, helping people learn more about transferring farmland, creating easements, finding an attorney, and the like, the lease builder will actually craft a draft lease agreement based on information it is given.

"Since March 8, 2018, the Farmland Access Legal Toolkit has had 20,520 users," said

Spiegel. "About 10% of them are returning users, which suggests that those people are continuing to find the site useful. There



Nick Youngson / CC3

have been 40,881 page views in total."

Spiegel said Jeanette Eicks, director of the Vermont Law School's Center for Legal Innovation worked with Exari Systems

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Free Tool to Help With Leasing Land (continued)

Inc., based in Boston, on the Farm Lease Builder. She said Exari donated its time for the project.

She said in the United States, about 40% of land can be considered farmland. Of that, 40% is leased. It's also expected that over the course of the next 10 years, a large number of farmers will be retiring. Many will be wanting to do something with their land that will require some kind of legal arrangement, which is why the Center for Agricultural Food Systems has created the toolkit.

"Land access is currently one of the biggest hurdles for new farmers in the United States," said Laurie Beyravand, director of the Center

for Agricultural Food Systems, in a release. "The Farmland Access Legal Toolkit assists new as well as retiring farmers through a suite of resources that offers innovative models of ownership, leasing, and estate planning that have worked for other farmers in similar situations. We're excited to add the Farm Lease Builder to the Toolkit."

Spiegel said since attorneys charge a great deal of money by the hour, the toolkit can help save farmers and landowners some time and money. She said because the tools are fairly new, it's not clear how many have used it.

"This tool provides a comprehensive process for helping farmers and landowners think

through how they'd like to handle issues that commonly arise in a farm lease situation," said Amanda Heyman, project partner and consultant with the Center. "Having thought through these issues in advance and having come to a common understanding, the parties to the agreement are much more likely to have a successful business relationship. Also, it helps to have something in black and white to refer back to a few years into the lease, when it's hard to remember exactly what was agreed upon, and to help resolve disputes."

The Farm Lease Builder can be found online at <https://farmlandaccess.org/farm-lease-builder/> or farmleasebuilder.org.

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Remembering Walt Rockwood

We received news from Rich Rockwood that his father, Walt Rockwood, passed away on Oct. 24. Walt was a longtime member of the NH-VTCTA and was active in helping the Association and its members in many ways, including as editor of this newsletter, as chair of our marketing committee, and also as chair of our 50th anniversary meeting. He will be missed, and we extend our condolences to Rich, Stephanie, and the rest of the family. Below is a brief excerpt from Walt's obituary.



In the early morning of October 24, 2019, Walter Gene Rockwood, 91, of Hartland and Chelsea, Vermont, joined the pre-deceased loves of his life, Beverly Alyce (Kenyon) Rockwood (1930-1999) to whom he was married for 50 years and Jean Peterson (1933-2013) with whom he spent 13 years. His passing was quiet and comfortable at the Jack Bryne Center in Lebanon,

NH, having been surrounded by his family. Walter (aka Rocky, Walt) was born on September 28, 1928 on the Bowers home-
stead in Hartland. He grew up in Hartland on the family dairy

farm and graduated from Windsor High School in 1945, where he courted Beverly. At the end of WW2, he served briefly in the U.S. Navy. Walter and Beverly were married on September 11, 1948 and he attended and graduated from the University of Vermont in 1950 with a degree in agriculture. He began his long and interesting life in Swanton, followed by residence in St. Albans and Georgia Plains as the Franklin County (dairy) Agent. During this time, he also served in the National Guard and rose to command an armored company in Swanton. In 1963 he, along with Beverly and their four children aged between 3 and 11, began his "journey" in the foreign service with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Togo, then in Guinea and Morocco until 1968. After earning his Master's Degree in Agricultural Communications at the University of Illinois in 1970 he worked at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria for several years, a year in Iran working for the United Nations, followed by many years at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines. His final years in Africa were in the Cote D'Ivoire as part of the Food for Peace program, but he worked part time with IRRI remotely until around 1998. He retired in 1988 and settled on Redrock Farm in Chelsea where he established a choose and cut Christmas tree farm. He was active in the Vermont-New Hampshire Christmas Tree Association, the Vermont Senior Guard, alumni associations from IITA and IRRI and the Chelsea community. Late in life he lived briefly in Hartland and has been residing at the Historic Homes of Runnemedede in Windsor for five years.



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