New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

June 2015

Special points of interest:

• 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. And we like to move around, so it doesn't matter what corner of NH or VT you're in. If you might be interested, please talk with Jim Horst or Patrick White (contact information on page 2).

Inside this issue:

Summer Meeting Preview	I
Promotion Board Update	1
President's Message	2
Association Contact Information	2
Growing Issues	4
Farm Manager Position	5
Trading Post	7
Credit Card Changes	9
Editor's Desk	10
Exotic Conifer Association	12

Summer Meeting Preview

The Summer Meeting of the NH-VT Christmas Tree Association will be held on Saturday, June 27, at Purinton Tree Farm in Huntington, Vt.

There will be a farm tour of this family-run choose-andcut farm, and Peter Purinton will also provide a tour of the farm's large-scale sugaring operation and high-tech sugarhouse.

Also on the agenda will be a look at the impact that climate change is having (and will continue to have) on farming in Vermont, presented by Joshua Faulkner, UVM farm and climate change program coordinator.

In the afternoon, Peter Purinton and Ron Kelley will conduct a walking tour of the farm to discuss tree spacing, species selection, insect and disease control and other issues. Peter will also discuss some of the equipment innovations he has come up with to make management tasks more efficient.

Also in the afternoon will be an alternate session on wreaths, greens and centerpieces. Judy Lang, Carla Purinton and Tami While will discuss the supplies and strategies they use. Everyone should feel free to bring their own favorite ribbons, bows, berries, etc., so everyone can share and learn about techniques and materials.

Registration (without a guaranteed meal) is available on-site if you have not already sent in your registration form. Contact Jim Horst at (802) 447-0660 with questions or for more information.

Promotion Board Update

The Christmas Tree Promotion Board held its second face-to-face meeting in the Chicago area, May 19-21. Much was accomplished over the three day period and board members are anxious to update the industry on their forward progress.

"Having the opportunity

for the board to meet for a few days was tremendously beneficial. It was an effective way to work through foundational items such as bylaws and policies, as well as giving us the time needed to examine the bigger questions about where

Continued on page 7

PAGE 2 **JUNE 2015**

President's Message

Hi all.

This past winter was tough on Christmas trees. Deep snow, long periods of extreme cold and wind and two late-season snowstorms that kept us from starting our spring season work until mid April. On top of that many tree farms have suffered the most severe winter burn I have ever seen. Was it species, or locations on hilltops/valleys or southern slopes/northern slopes? Or maybe something in the soil or the influences of global warming? We will try to make sense of this issue at our upcoming meeting at Purinton's Tree Farm in Huntington, Vt., on June 27.

On another topic, the WOTUS (Waters of the U.S.) rule proposed by the EPA to help safeguard America's waterways is meeting a lot of resistance. As proposed, it is opposed by at least 30 states—but the EPA is still pushing to get it through. We need to stay alert and informed on this subject. Agriculture in general could be significantly impacted in ways that would make it harder than ever to succeed with whatever crops you may grow.

Bring your voice and your opinions to the meeting and share them with the rest of us. after all, sharing information is what we do best...See you there!

> Dan Beloin President

NCTA Events



Mark your calendars and clear your schedules to be a part of this important event! NCTA will host a one-day seminar in conjunction with the regional conference taking place at Richardson's Farm in Spring Grove, Ill. Plan to be there, and stay tuned to www.realchristmastrees.or g for more information!

July 23: NCTA Seminar July 24-25: Regional Conference plus the National Tree & Wreath Contests



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



2015 Officers

President Vice President Recording Secretary Russell Reay Exec. Sec./Treas. Past President

Dan Beloin Tom Lang lim Horst Mary Lou Schmidt

belointreefarm@gmail.com balsamacres@comcast.net russreay@vermontel.net mtafarms@comcast.net elysianh@sover.net

2015 Directors (Term Ends)

Andy Aldrich	aaldrich@pshift.com	(2016)
Dan Beloin	belointreefarm@gmail.com	(2015)
Mike Godzyk	sibgotree@gmail.com	(2016)
Ben Hoyt	b.hoyt@roadrunner.com	(2016)
Tom Lang	balsamacres@comcast.net	(2015)
Paul Lemire	mrrplemire@msn.com	(2015)
Nigel Manley	info@therocks.org	(2017)
Carl Szych	breezyhillacresszych@yahoo.com	(2017)
Jeff Taylor	taylortreepeople@aol.com	(2017)
Bill Tester	bill_tester@hotmail.com	(2015)
Bob White	whitechristmasvt@googlemail.com	(2017)
Patrick White	pwhitevt@aol.com	(2016)

Contact Information

Jim Horst, Executive Secretary 569 Pleasant Valley Road Bennington, VT 05201-9637 Phone: (802) 447-0660 E-mail: info@nh-vtchristmastree.org

Association Web site: www.nh-vtchristmastree.org

For matters related to *Tree Line* only:

Patrick White, Editor NHVTCTA Tree Line 18 Merritt Road Middlesex, VT 05602 Phone: (802) 223-3880 E-mail: pwhitevt@aol.com

Copies of the Association bylaws and policies are available to members at any time by contacting the Executive Secretary.

2015 Tree Line Publication Schedule Issue Ad/Submission Deadline

January June June 5 September Sept. 4



Lawns & Landscape ~ Gardens & Orchards ~ Deer Food Plots

(877) 835-8321

Check with us before you buy..... Herbicides, Insecticides, Fungicides





Competitive pricing on orders of any size.
Volume discounts offered!

Use coupon code NHVT for a 3% discount on your first order (In addition to any volume discounts)

Purchase online at www.KeystonePestSolutions.com Or call us at (877)835-8321 PAGE 4 JUNE 2015

Growing Issues

Thanks to Bob White for sending in this recap of some recent management practices on his farm.

I did several tests starting three years ago to find out if different materials could help us increase pH in the root zone on our no-till farm practice.

It is pretty common knowledge that lime moves very, very slowly in soils. So liming the surface is not very effective in correcting the low pH 4 to 6 inches down that we have caused by years of fertilizing, especially in bands.

Wood ash has been advertised as more mobile, provides organic material and potassium, so I bought a trailer load and put it on about half of the farm. I did a test plot area with it applied very heavily to see if it would kill the trees at some level. The Canaan fir in the test plot are doing fine.

After three years, the majoring light soil after three years. It is still in the top 2 would not suggest this for frast inches. It was not a magic bullet. but it maybe an option for bal-

I did another test with different lime sizes; the field marking lime was clearly better then ag lime but still was no magic bullet at adjusting soil pH 4 to 6 inches down where most problems exist.

Putting pelletized dolomitic lime in with a fertilizer mix used to be a good idea, but the two quarries in our region changed to an organic binder that does not hold up in the fertilizer blend process, and turns into a real mess in a spreader. The calcitic lime from SLC in Swanton, Vt., still holds up in the blend process but we lose the magnesium from the dolomite, and magnesium on its own is pretty pricey.

One thing I found that did change the pH at 4 to 6 inches was way over-applying lime or wood ash. On the surface, with upper pH about 7, the lower levels had increased about a point in light soil after three years. I would not suggest this for fraser but it maybe an option for bal-

Species	Desirable pH Range	
Balsam Fir	5.0 - 5.5	
Douglas Fir	6.0 - 7.0	
Fraser Fir	5.0 - 5.5	
Concolour/White Fir	6.0 - 6.5	
Grand Fir	6.0 - 6.5	
Canaan Fir	5.5 - 6.0	
Noble Fir	5.0 - 6.0	
Norway Spruce	5.0 - 5.5	
Blue Spruce	6.0 - 7.0	

sam, as I see no problems with the canaan in the test plot that I did.

Moving away from urea, which lowers pH as a nitrogen source, into CAN may be a good option for us but has not been tested yet that I am aware of for its impact on pH.

I would suggest liming using the same method you apply fertilizer so that only that soil that got fertilizer gets the lime; if you have strips that get no fertilizer, they likely need no lime.

Remember: old lime piles do not go away, if you over-lime you will be stuck with it most likely for the rest of your life, so be careful. As discussed in the past, taking standard soil tests to determine pH levels does not work too well for us to identify the pH problems we have created. An easy way to identify that you have a problem (and most of us do), is with a foliar test. If manganese is way high compared to iron, it usually means your pH is way low in the root zone. Desire a 1 to 1 ratio; past 2 to 1 is a problem. We often see greater then 4 to 1, which can be toxic.

pH is a major problem for most of us, especially with fra

Continued on page 8

Santa's Wholesale Floral Supply

Exclusive line of:

- *Christmas Ribbon *Wreath Rings
- *Wreath Decorations
 - *Wreath Machines
- *Garland Machines



~Best Service at Lowest Price ~Same Day Shipping ~Free Catalog

N9678 N Summit Lane Summit Lake, WI 54485 (800)772-6827 www.santasupplies.com JUNE 2015 PAGE 5

Farm Manager Position

The non-profit Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests seeks a selfmotivated individual for the position of Christmas Tree Farm Manager at its Rocks Estate in Bethlehem, New Hampshire.

The successful candidate will have a minimum of 2-3 years of commercial farm experience and experience hiring, training and supervising others. A minimum education of a two-year community college degree or equivalent is preferred. A degree with program focus in agriculture and/or management is preferred.

This is a full-time position. The Christmas Tree Farm Manager is responsible for operating and managing the Christmas tree farm, and includes daily work in the field. The position involves hiring, training and supervision of seasonal staff. The position is also responsible for property management at the Rocks Estate and Bretzfelder Park.

The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests is a statewide land conservation organization with 10,000 members that was founded in 1901 to protect New Hampshire's most important landscapes and promote wise use of its renewable natural resources. Today, the Forest Society owns 178 reserva-

tions in communities across the state, stewards more than 700 conservation easements and deed restrictions, and conducts ongoing programs in research, advocacy, land protection, sustainable forest management, and environmental education.

A full job description is online at www.forestsociety.org Applications are due Tuesday, June 30, 2015. Interested applicants should email a cover letter and resume to Rita Carroll, Reservation Stewardship Coordinator, at rcarroll@forestsociety.org. No telephone inquiries, please. The Forest Society is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.



PAGE 6 JUNE 2015

Promotion Board Update (continued)

Continued from page 1

the industry stands and the future we would like to see," commented CTPB chairperson, Betty Malone.

Strategic Planning

The strategic planning session was a highlight of the Chicago meeting. Fully understanding the value of evaluating the current market and retail climate for Christmas trees, board members then used this background to begin visioning the desired future for the Christmas tree industry.

Executive Director, Tim O'Conner led the group through a series of questions and scenarios to help identify priorities for the Christmas Tree Promotion Board. This work led to the development of a mission and vision statement:

Vision Statement

The Christmas Tree Promotion Board will enhance the value and demand for cut Christmas trees creating and increasing op-



The Christmas Tree Promotion Board, back row from left: Mark Steel-hammer, Mark Arkills, Rex Korson, Bentley Curry, Jim Rockis, Chris Maciborski, Della Deal and Paul Battaglia. Front row from left, officers: Beth Walterscheidt, Cubby Steinhart, Betty Malone and Jim Heater.

portunities for growers, importers and others in the industry.

Mission Statement

The CTPB is focused on improving the future of the industry by increasing the value and demand for cut Christmas trees through promotion, research and education.

The vision and mission statements will guide the board

in all future decision-making; with all activities and resource allocations being held to the standard of these guiding principles.

As the board continued its strategic planning, they established a series of goals and areas of focus that will serve as a platform for its efforts. They also identified challenges to overcome in order for the board to achieve success for the Christmas tree industry. (These items are outlined in the accompanying side bar.)

Establishing a Foundation

One of the first items on the agenda of the May meeting in Chicago was a presentation by John Paul Koch and Brad Miller of Metropolitan Bank, who provided a comprehensive overview of the services available through the bank and how they will work with CTPB. While together, the CTPB Executive Committee and bank representatives took part



JUNE 2015 PAGE 7

Promotion Board Update (continued)

in the signing of documents on a line of credit offered by Metropolitan Bank to provide operating funds needed until the board begins collecting assessments.

"I was very impressed with the services offered by Metropolitan Bank. They are experienced in working with commodity check offs and offer very personal service," commented CTPB treasurer, Cubby Steinhart. "Their willingness to offer a line of credit to this new venture is greatly appreciated by the board."

Bylaws and an extensive list of board policies were reviewed and approved at the meeting as well. These documents, although maybe not the most exciting part of the board's work, form a critical foundation from which the board will operate and undertake promotional and research work. The policies also outline the procedures for assessment collection.

Next Steps

Throughout the summer, the

board will continue its forward progress and hold bi-weekly conference call meetings. Chairperson Betty Malone will continue to identify growers and other industry representatives to serve on the various committees of the Christmas Tree Promotion Board.

The board will also be busy this summer actively reaching out to growers across the country as they attend a number of summer meetings and field day events. This will give growers an opportunity to learn more about the promotion board and for promotion board members to answer questions and gather input from producers.

Challenge - Removing real trees - Overcome Connecting lennial connecting and consumption board and for promotion board members to answer questions and gather input from producers.

The board is planning its next face-to-face meeting in North Carolina in late August in conjunction with the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association meeting.

Christmas Tree Promotion Board Strategic Planning

Goals to achieve the future we seek to create:

- Enhance value and demand for real Christmas trees
- Improve the consumer attributes of real Christmas trees
- Build the tradition of real Christmas trees
- Connect CTPB's programs with growers and industry

Challenges to overcome:

- Removing barriers to choosing real trees
- Overcoming the "no tree" choice Connecting real trees with millennial consumers.
- Engage growers/industry to use CTPB's programs with retailers and consumers.

Creating alignment:

Alignment means the vision is the driving force behind all of the CTPB's activities. All goals, objectives and tactics should be evaluated on their contribution to achieving the CTPB's vision.

Tree Promotion Board will also certainly be a topic of discussion at upcoming NH-VT Christmas Tree Association meetings.

Trading Post

FOR SALE: Solo backpack mist blower type 40110. Hasn't been used in more than a decade and won't start, but is in good shape. Free to someone who wants it. Contact Rich Rockwood at rich@christmastrees.net

Transplants

Fir – Pine – Spruce

Hartikka Tree Farms (860) 376-2351 www.treeman2.com

PAGE 8 **JUNE 2015**

Growing Issue (continued)

Continued from page 4

ser. The trees have major problems picking up nutrients in really low pH soils, and just die in really high pH soils, where balsam can live.

Luckily for us, soils in our region have pH that is naturally about right for growing Fraser. In old corn ground, etc., that was over-limed years ago, most of us have learned that balsam is a better choice for those areas.

pH imbalance has been linked to our most common prob- pH levels from one end to the lem, which is iron and manganese being very imbalanced to the point of toxicity in trees. It is winter burn this year. pretty easy to see a rapid greening of foliage when foliar apply-

ing iron. This holds true for the entire balsam range in the U.S. and Canada that are continuously fertilized and are no-till. But the trees are not usually low has become a problem for some in iron, they just get overpowered with manganese as it becomes to available in our really low pH.

On my farm and at others, winter burn on Fraser seems to be very related to pH issues. In well balanced, good growing trees there are few issues. I have a field that has very different other it is very easy to pick out the areas with high pH from the

The color is always a little dull in these soils compared to

the other end of the field and will take a year longer to mature.

Broken branches in Fraser of us from snow load. If you look closely, it appears we cause most of the problem with our pruning practices. We often start cutting the top whole of branches at about 3 feet for leader development and foliage thickness; unfortunately, the short-cut branches do not turn into strong branches, they often fork creating a weak point that can break under the snow load.

We are going to start looking at different ways to prune or not prune the top whorls at the 3-foot height.



JUNE 2015 PAGE 9

Credit Cards Are Changing—Swipes Are Out, Chips are In

The following Associated Press article does a great job of describing an important change taking place this fall that will impact all busineses—including Christmas tree farms—that accept credit cards. Read up now so you have time to plan for any changes in equipment and processes you will need to make.

New credit and debit cards with computer chips are putting the squeeze on small businesses. The cards being rolled out by banks and credit card companies are aimed at reducing fraud from counterfeit cards. As chip cards are phased in, magnetic stripe cards, which are easier for thieves to copy, will be phased out. Businesses of all sizes face an Oct. 1 deadline to get new card readers and software that can handle chips. Most estimates of transition costs for small companies vary from the low hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars due to the wide range of equipment used.

If businesses don't meet the deadline set by companies including MasterCard, Visa and American Express, they can be held liable for transactions made ware prices start at several hundered also read magnetic stripes and some also handle what are known as contactless payments made with services like Apple Pay or Google Wallet. Most software prices start at several hundered magnetic stripes and some also handle what are

The switch to new chips in credit and debit cards poses a threat for small companies because they can't get the volume discounts on the new equipment that big retailers get. And they don't have in-house tech experts to install the new systems.

"This is one of the biggest nightmares merchants are going to face," says Michael Kleinman, owner of Mason Eyewear, a



store in Brickell, Florida, and Centurion Payment Services, a company that processes credit and debit card payments.

'Additional expense'

The card readers shoppers see are just one part of a payment processing system. They're connected to software in a merchant's computer system that receives the transaction information and sends it to a payment processor. The processor then posts a charge or debit to the cardholder's account and a credit to the merchant's account.

The simplest card readers used in stores and other small businesses are likely to cost at least \$100. The machines will also read magnetic stripes and some also handle what are known as contactless payments made with services like Apple ware prices start at several hundred dollars, but can run into the thousands for more complex systems. Many companies have computer systems that do more than handle payments — they also manage inventory and customer and vendor information. Businesses like restaurants and those with multiple locations are likely to have the most complex systems and the highest expenses.

Dickie Brennan & Co., which operates four New Orleans restaurants, expects to pay more than \$25,000 to replace card readers and software, says Derek Nettles, the company's information technology director.

Changing card readers and software isn't something many small business owners, even tech-savvy ones, will be able to do on their own. They'll need to hire technology consultants who can charge as much as \$100 an hour or more to install the system and ensure it works.

Even with Kleinman's expertise in payment processing as owner of Centurion Payment Services, it took him five hours to install two card readers and software. And he was on the phone getting technical support from his vendor while he did it. Although the new system works, there are glitches that keep him tinkering. For example, sometimes the system has trouble accepting certain cards.

"Most people are definitely going to need to hire somebody to do it," Kleinman said.

It may make sense for companies with combined payment, inventory and other systems to separate the payment part to make them less vulnerable to hackers, said Scott Shedd, a technology consultant with WGM Associates in Scottsdale, Arizona.

But that will add more costs, said Avivah Litan, an analyst with Gartner Research. "If you want to use this opportunity to secure your systems, it could cost you thousands," she said.

PAGE 10 JUNE 2015

Editor's Desk

NCTA Auction

The National Christmas
Tree Association (NCTA) is
hosting a 30-day online auction
to support the Real Tree Advocacy Fund. Check out the
unique, vintage, collectible, and
nostalgic Christmas Tree items
from NCTA and place your bid.

All proceeds from the auction will go to support 2015 Real Tree Advocacy activities including the media hotline, fighting fire code issues, the White House Tree presentation and much more.

Items available to bid on include collectibles from the 500th Anniversary of the first decorated tree, a beautiful Christmas quilt, framed art prints, ornaments and more.

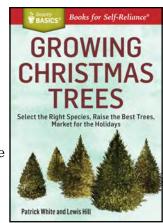
Check out all items at www.32auctions.com/NCTA and start bidding today!

A New Growing Resource

Storey Communications has released an update version of Lewis Hill's original how-to guide: *Growing Christmas Trees*.

In the interest of full disclosure, the content was updated by yours truly, though I have no financial stake in the sale of the book—just an interest in getting the information out there. The book now serves as a more modern guide for those considering getting into Christmas tree

farming and looking for answers.
Drawing on resources from around the country, the book provides basic in-



formation on soils, tree species, fertilization and more, as well as a look at the work (planting, shearing, harvesting, etc.) needed to run a successful Christmas tree business.

The book can be purchased online at www.storey.com



Asack & Son SEEDLINGS & TRANSPLANTS Balsam • Fraser • Canaan Balsam X Fraser Hybrids

P. O. Box 37 • Barton, VT 05822

Tel & Fax: 802-754-6934

email: asack@together.net

www. billasack.com

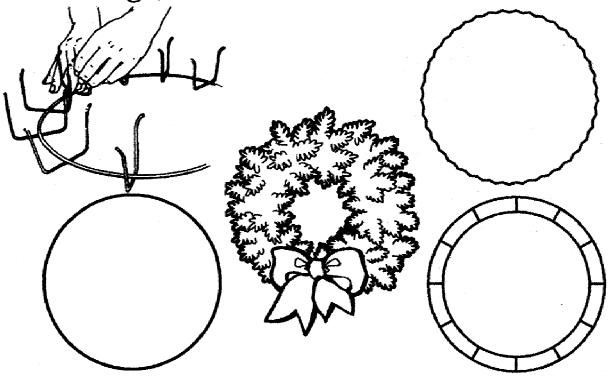
Transplant Type	Season	Tree Age	Price per Transplant
Balsam Fir: Mountain Strain Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$0.95
Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$0.95
Balsam-Fraser Hybrids: Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$0.95
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Rogers Mtn.) Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$0.95
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Ayers) Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$0.95
Mystery Tree: Late-Breaking Fraser Fir	Spring 2016	2-2	\$1.10
Canaan Fir: West Virginia Seed Source	Spring 2016	2-2	\$1.05

Questions?? Contact Bill Asack evenings 6-8 p.m. 1-802-754-6934

Wreath Frames

For All Your Christmas Needs

Clamp, Crimp, Plain, Double Rail Rings, Custom Works & Much More



We Have Topiary Frames Too! Top Quality - Low Prices

518-272-3800 • 888-773-8769



RIVERSIDE ENTERPRISES

484 RIVER STREET • TROY, NEW YORK 12180

PAGE 12 JUNE 2015

Exotic Conifer Association: Are You A Member?

If you are one of the many Christmas tree growers who is growing "exotic" species of trees, or at least experimenting with some of these varieties, it makes sense to consider joining the Exotic Conifer Association.

This is a group of individuals interested in exploring alternative species of Christmas trees and ornamentals. The mission of the Exotic Conifer Association is to educate, collect, and disseminate information from the experience of growing noninvasive exotic conifers as Christmas trees and ornamentals.

Many exotics can provide one or more of the following benefits:

 exceptional needle retention, foliage, color, density and texture; desirable shape and form with little shearing;

- insect and disease resistance:
- frost and drought resistance; and
- aesthetically pleasing looks and interesting, culturally educational origins.

The objectives of the Exotic Conifer Association are to:

- encourage quality seed availability and seed orchard establishment
- coordinate group purchases of seeds, plugs, seedlings, and transplants when available
- share information regarding exotic conifers through field days and online discussion groups; and
- organize an annual field day to observe, discuss, and share experiences about exotics.

The 2015 Annual Meeting of the Exotic Conifer Association will be held September 12 at Hill View Christmas Tree Farm in Middleburg, Pa.

More detailed information will be posted on the Association's Web site (www.exoticconifer.com) later this month.

The Web site also includes information on how to become a member of the Exotic Conifer Association (individual membership is just \$30, and there are other membership categories available, as well). There are also detailed descriptions of many different types of exotic trees being grown on Christmas tree farms in this country and around the world, as well as links to some farms that are growing exotics.

