

Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

January 2017

Special points of interest:

◆ Trading Post

FOR SALE: John Deere tag-along sprayer, about 25 gal., \$150. Backpack fertilizer spreader, \$100. Contact Barbara Morse in Cabot, Vt., at (802) 563-2088.

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Winter Meeting at Vermont Farm Show

The Winter meeting of the NHVTCTA will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 31, at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds in Essex Jct., Vermont, in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show.

Also, don't forget to bring a tree and/or wreath to enter in the Vermont Farm Show competition. It is good exposure for the industry as a whole and a good marketing opportunity for individual farms!

The agenda includes the annual group discussion of the past sales season for choose-and-cut, retail and wholesale.

Elizabeth Spinney with the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation will discuss control of non-native invasive plants on and around the farm.

After a barbecue chicken lunch, we will be joined by Alan Giese of the Vermont Science Initiative and Lyndon State College. He is one of the state's

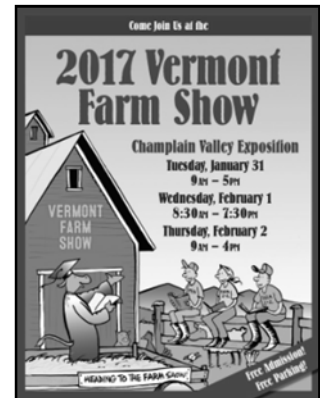
leading experts on ticks and will talk about the life cycle, populations and health

risks of ticks, as well as precautions to take when working out in the field.

Finally, Sidney Bosworth from the UVM College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will be on hand to discuss "Common Christmas Tree Weeds: Identification, Growth Habits and Control."

Registration for the meeting (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.



NCTA Update

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) selected a new management team in 2016. Tim O'Connor and Associates began with NCTA and the Christmas Spirit Foundation on

July 1, 2016.

NCTA partnered with Christmas Tree Promotion Board to represent the industry at the National Fire Prevention Asso-

Continued on page 6

President's Message

Hi all,

2016 has broken last year's record as the hottest average temperature ever recorded, following a three-year trend. Will this continue into 2017? Is it good or bad for Christmas tree growers? We have to forge ahead with our master plan and hope for the best as we make adjustment along the way.

Overall tree sales were good this year for everyone I've talked to. Wholesale inquiries were through the roof from all over the country for fraser firs. The glut in the Carolinas is easing at the same time that the Christmas Tree Promotion Board is kicking in with its National message of "It's Christmas, Keep It Real!"

Balsam wholesale orders were somewhat slower, partly due to the Canadian currency exchange rate hovering around 30 percent, making it tempting to shop across the border.

The Winter meeting should be interesting as always with a weed specialist getting us ready for the onslaught of the spring weed attack.

Please don't forget to bring a tree for the contest. We shouldn't pass up this great opportunity to show the public what we are all about. See you all there.

*Dan Beloin,
President*



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



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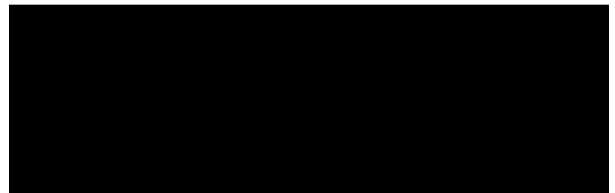
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Copies of the Association bylaws and policies are available to members at any time by contacting the Executive Secretary.



Round-Up of NHVTCTA Activities

Nationwide, 17,141 trees were delivered to military members and their families at 63 different military bases, both domestic and abroad, as part of the Trees for Troops program.

The NH-VT Christmas Tree Association sent a record 595 trees as part of this effort, thanks to the generosity of member farms as well as two corporate sponsors, the Autosaver Group and The Cog Railroad. The trees were picked up by FedEx at The Rocks in Bethlehem, N.H., with students from Bethlehem Elementary School, the North Country Chapter of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association and Mountain Star farms assisting with loading.

The New Hampshire Farm & Forest Exposition will take place February 17-18 at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester. The NHVTCTA will have a booth at the event and will be displaying trees. If you'd like to take part, please contact Paul Lemire at mrrplemire@msn.com

The September issue of *Tree Line* was already in the mail by the time the Tunbridge World's Fair wrapped up, but Rich Rockwood sent along this recap of winners in the tree contest, along with a note that nearly \$50 was collected for Trees for Troops.

There were 15 trees displayed, the largest display ever at the fair.

Grand champion: Balsam Fir from Gilbert Tree Farm

Blue ribbons:

Balsam fir: Redrock Farm and Werner Tree Farm

Fraser fir: Nichols Tree Farm and Redrock Farm

Other: White spruce from Johnson's Tree Farm (Alan Johnson)
Tabletop: Redrock Farm

Other premiums were also given to trees from Bunny Acres, Nichols, Redrock, and Johnson. Wreath grand champion: Double-sided decorated from Nichols Tree Farm—also two other blue ribbons for single and double sided undecorated wreaths.



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Christmas Tree Promotion Board Update

Editor's Note: The Christmas Tree Promotion Board provided this summary of the marketing activities that took during the past season's new "It's Christmas. Keep it Real." campaign.

In an upscale shopping area near the financial district in New York City, a "pop up" event featuring a cozy living room set, a wise-cracking Nutcracker and a beautiful, 13 foot talking Christmas tree drew attention from passersby and engaged brave pedestrians willing to chat with a witty Fraser fir. The event went to a higher level in the afternoon when actor, Neil Patrick Harris joined in the fun as the voice of the tree and surprised participants by emerging through the set door bearing gifts!

This was all part of the effort to gain media attention for the Christmas Tree Promotion Board's "Its Christmas. Keep it Real." campaign.

The campaign featured 40 days of individual "activations"; some small and some large, all featured on the campaign website that unlocked new images and content each day, starting with November 15. Much of the campaign was designed to be featured and shared on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, with a focus on garnering positive media coverage through on-line and traditional media channels.

While wholesale Christmas tree producers were busily harvesting and shipping trees, and choose & cut growers were welcoming customers to their farms, CTPB's ad agency and public



Actor Neil Patrick Harris surprises guests at a Christmas Tree Promotion Board event in New York City.

relations firms were busier than Santa's elves; crafting messaging and images that would appeal to consumers of all ages. The positive story of fresh Christmas trees was told in dozens of ways. Here are a few examples:

The campaign became an official sponsor of the Trees for Troops campaign – providing additional signage for all pick up locations that included the "It's Christmas. Keep it Real." message.

Hosting "Mommy Bloggers" with strong followings to a day at a Christmas tree farm with their families. These bloggers then shared their experiences with their followers in their own words and photographs.

Mixed media artist, Quentin Jones, created an Avant Garde design that was produced on t-shirts and created outreach for the campaign engaging the fash-

ion industry. The t-shirts were sold on Amazon and proceeds from the sales were donated to Trees for Troops.

The real Christmas tree "dream team" donned specially designed backpacks that held real Christmas trees while they engaged New Yorkers at two high visibility events; The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and Santa Con.

Like the Mommy Bloggers, influencers on Instagram shared campaign messaging accompanying beautiful real Christmas tree photography with their followers

In a partnership with Handy.com, Handy professionals shared the real tree message while offering a fresh Christmas tree set up service in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Boston, Miami and featured the campaign in promotional videos.

Promotion Board Update (continued)

Dozens of clever memes and gifs were created for industry members and real Christmas tree lovers to share with their friends and followers on Facebook and Instagram.

A heart-warming “Manifesto Video” was produced for the campaign, and effectively captured the heart of what it means to be a Christmas tree. This video was used to engage potential partners in the campaign, as well as to provide the industry a tool to show how



Christmas Tree Promotion Board ambassadors at the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

it impacts families each and every year.

A popular video blog couple,

“Justin and April”, shared their family Christmas tree story with their large following

Printable designs and banners were made available for growers and retailers to download, print and use at their retail locations.

All of these activations, along with the Neil Patrick Harris event, the “Win a Tree for Life” contest and dozens of other

campaign components, are

housed at the campaign website:

www.itschristmaskeepitreal.com

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NCTA Update (continued)

Continued from Page 1

ciation Convention in Las Vegas in June. Ellis Schmidt and Jim Heater served as ambassadors. Ellis Schmidt also attended the ASTM meeting in Chicago where fire retardant standards are reviewed.

The Association continues to represent the industry in Washington. In addition to monitoring the election results and their impact on the industry, our lobbyist Craig Regelbrugge represented the industry on a number of issues including:

- H2 Improvement Project – helping to guide legislators and federal workers in improving and streamlining guest worker programs
- Estate and other tax issues Modifications in the timeline for new overtime law
- Rules that impact pesticide and herbicide use by the indus-

try; a recent example is the potential loss or change in uses for Pyrethroids.

The annual presentation of the White House Christmas Tree took place the day after Thanksgiving. Dave and Mary Vander Velden of Whispering Pines Tree Farm in Oconto, Wis., represented the industry at this event as the Grand Champion winner of the Na-



tional Christmas Tree Contest.

NCTA continued its role as the “voice of the industry” during the holiday season; answering media and consumer questions and providing press materials. Because the NCTA budget was reduced significantly this year, there were no funds for this effort. The Christmas Tree

Promotion Board agreed to fund this work in 2016. Hugh Whaley was engaged to serve in this role and a complete report on media reach is forthcoming.

2016 was another strong year for Trees for Troops. The Christmas Spirit Foundation continues to work closely with FedEx which provides all the shipping. More than 17,000 Christmas trees were delivered to military families at 63 bases. Thank you to all the farms that donated trees to this effort.

NCTA in 2017

Now that the busy season is behind us, we can focus on the future of NCTA. Much is to be considered and decided, however the new management team is recommending things to streamline the association’s management. They will be looking at items such as the website, tree locator and more.

Members likely noticed a simpler dues renewal process this year. NCTA is no longer asking growers to renew their membership on-line. We understand that this was very difficult and often wasn’t working.

Dues renewals were sent in late December and forms were pre-filled with grower data, eliminating the need for growers to complete a new form each year.

The 2017 National Christmas Tree contest is scheduled to take place in Green Bay, Wisconsin in cooperation with the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Growers meeting. More information will be made available in the months to come!

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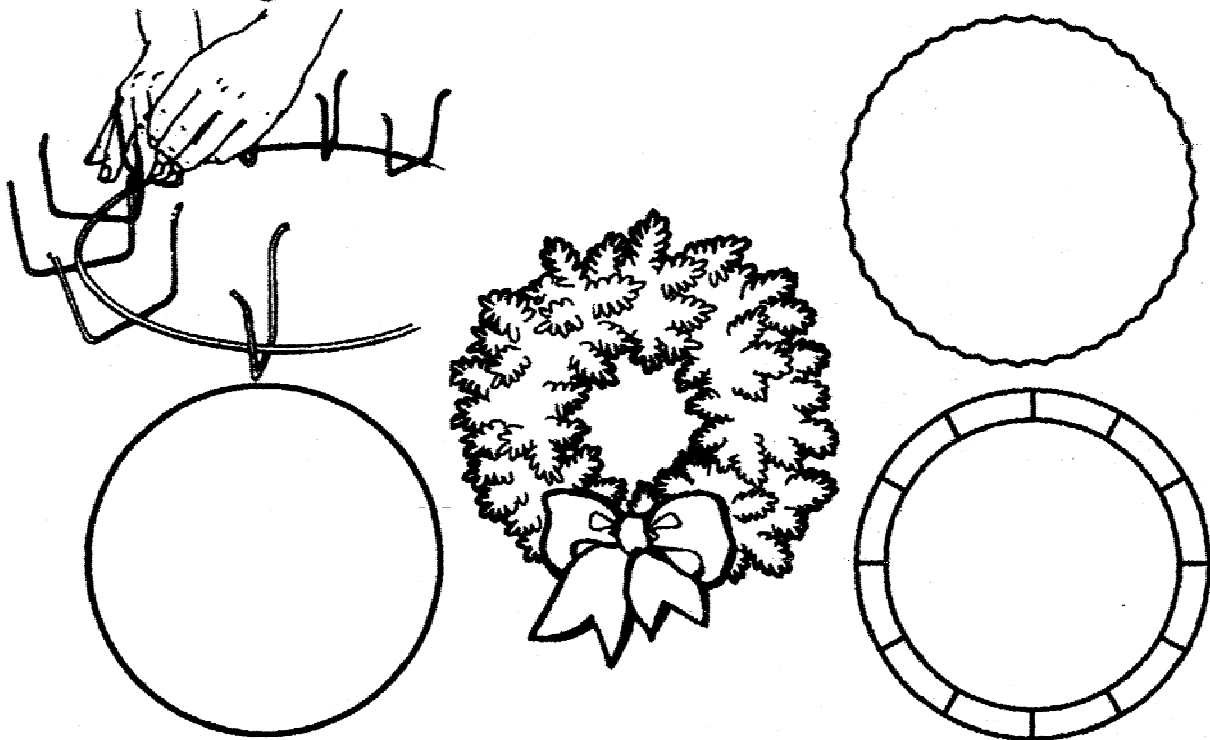
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Needle Retention Research

*Source: N.C. State University,
College of Natural Resources*

Each Christmas, families across North Carolina and the country embark on a journey to find the perfect Christmas tree. They walk tree by tree through lots looking for the right fullness, an even triangular shape, a sweet piney aroma, and soft needles that don't seem to fall off easily.

For many, it is the last characteristic, known as needle retention, which is most important. Consumers cite messiness as one of the most common reasons for not purchasing a live Christmas tree.

For decades, farmers have refined the skill of identifying high-quality trees by visually

examining the most desired characteristics. But it takes up to eight years to distinguish a marketable

tree, which means eight years of costs and resources associated with cultivation.

With the help of scientists in the College of Natural Resources, farmers may soon be looking inside of the tree rather than outside to identify market-



able family lines. Dr. Lilian Matallana, a postdoctoral research scholar in Forestry and Environmental Resources, spends her days in a lab in Biltmore Hall examining the genetic makeup of Fraser Firs, which represent over 96 percent

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Needle Retention Research (continued)

of all Christmas trees produced in North Carolina.

With the market for Christmas trees beginning in November, farmers start cutting trees as early as October—prior to a critical point in a tree’s development.

Between October 15 and November 15, trees cultivated in North Carolina are typically exposed to the first cold snap of the year. Trees harvested before this first exposure to cold have been shown to have less needle retention.

The capacity for needle retention after harvest is not only critical for consumers who dislike messy tress, it makes tress suitable for shipping long dis-

tances and ensures a quality product reaches Christmas tree lots.

“Once you cut a tree the conditions change. You shorten the time the plant can survive. But we see that some trees have the ability to retain needles independent of environmental factors, so we know it is something in the genes,” Dr. Matallana said.

Dr. Matallana’s goal is to eventually create a list of unique genes that are associated with needle retention. Farmers will then be able to test their trees to see if that gene is active.

“If they can do a test, farmers will know in a short about of time which tress have market-

able characteristics, and they don’t have to wait eight years and use fertilizer, farms, people, water, land, etc., to figure out which tress are high quality,” Dr. Matallana said. Farmers will then be able to actively cultivate these family lines ensuring high-value trees year after year.

Christmas tree production is a \$100 million-a-year-industry in North Carolina. The state has over 300 Christmas tree growers, with approximately 37 million trees growing on over 32,000 acres. It is the second largest producer of trees in the country, behind Oregon, and produces over 19 percent of real trees in the United States.

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Real vs. Fake Christmas Tree Sales

Editor's Note: In December, Forbes published a short article by Niall McCarthy documenting the sales of both plastic and real Christmas trees in recent years.

For many American families, the ritual of going out to buy the perfect Christmas tree is an essential part of the holiday season. Even though the experience of purchasing a large tree and stuffing it into the trunk of a station wagon may prove stressful, some people feel that Christmas wouldn't be the same without it.

Once that glorious smell wafts through the house from that beautifully adorned tree, surely everyone would agree that the real deal is worth the effort?

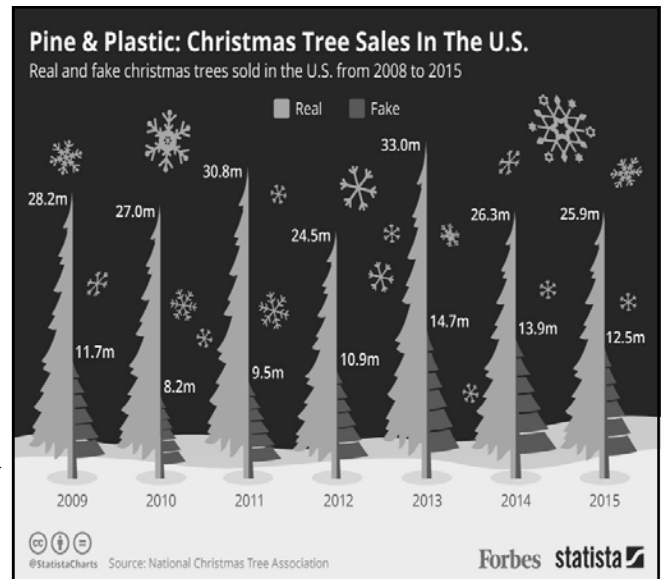
A considerable number of Americans are happy to give up the scent and prefer dragging

their faithful plastic tree out of the basement every year. Unlike a real tree, a polyvinyl chloride creation is a one-off purchase that doesn't turn brown and shed its needles all over the living room floor.

Families with a fake tree also avoid the chore of disposing of their sad-looking brown tree in early January.

Even though real trees consistently outsell fake ones every year, many consumers consider the latter a more long-term investment. Last year, 25.9 million real trees were sold in the U.S.

compared to 12.5 million fakes, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. Sales of both variations reached their peak in 2013 when 33 million real trees were sold, along with 14.7 million fakes.



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