

Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

September 2013

Special points of interest:

♦ Trees for Troops

The NHVTCTA will once again be taking part in the Trees for Troops program. If you have never donated trees before, please consider it. In most cases, the Association will arrange to have the trees picked up at your farm. All you need to do is have them cut and wrapped and waiting. Whether it's 2 trees or 20, every bit helps. Contact Bob White (VT) or Nigel Manley (NH) for more information—their contact information can be found on page 2.



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Fall Meeting: Elysian Hills

The NHVTCTA's fall meeting will be held Saturday, Sept. 21, at Elysian Hills, the farm of Association President Mary Lou Schmidt and husband, Bill.

A business meeting will kick off the day at 9:30 followed by the always-informative "sales forecast" discussion with a look at expected supply, demand and pricing for the coming year.

Bill Schmidt will then describe "lessons learned" in 33 years of tree farming, as well as issues relating to stewardship and farm transfers.

Following lunch, three rotating field sessions will take place featuring:

— Shearing for proper tops and density by Larry Downey and Bill Schmidt;

— Invasive plants, identification and control by Jeff Taylor; and

— Pest management, identification and control, by Barbara Schultz.

ALSO, there will be a non-field alternative session in the afternoon on **wreaths and greens**, including how to locate and cut good brush for different applications and how to make kissing balls.

There's plenty of opportunity to learn. If you haven't already registered, it's not too late. Call Jim Horst at (802) 447-1900 to sign up.

NCTA Update

The National Christmas Tree Association has a new executive director, Dustin McKissen. He is currently traveling to attend various state/regional association gatherings to speak with growers and learn about the needs of the industry.

The NHVTCTA hopes to have McKissen attend one of our meetings at some point in the future.



While the hope is that the Farm Bill containing the Christmas tree industry Check Off program will eventually

pass, those funds are required to be directed only toward marketing.

The NCTA will continue its focus on protection and advocacy, working to address issues that affect the present

Continued on page 7

President's Message

So sorry to report the passing of longtime member Herb Hunt and just recently, Jean Peterson, wife of Walt Rockwood (see more on page 12). Our sympathy goes out to their families. We will miss both of them.

It's hard to believe that almost two years have passed since I chaired my first Directors' and Members' meetings back in January 2012. And here we are, winding down, as this will be my last meeting as your President. I have enjoyed the whole experience of being able to serve you. Thank you.

In my June "President's

Message" I mentioned a new trend we were noticing in customer preference for a more open tree and our intention to leave more unshered trees (in their sale year) for customer tagging. At that time we didn't realize that we would be hosting the fall meeting at Elysian Hills. Now you will see for yourself the striped ribbons on the unshered trees available for tagging in Oct. The ribbons will be removed before then. We'll report in 2014, the results of how many of these trees are selected.

When you attend the September meeting you will also

see our 14-foot stone Christmas tree, designed and built by stonewaller Jared Flynn. The silver star on the top was designed and crafted by my grandson, Justin Morrell of Morrell Metalsmiths. Jared has started a second tree and brought in stone for a third one. Hopefully these will be completed by our September meeting.

We look forward to seeing all of you at our fall meeting and hope you will enjoy Elysian Hills.

Mary Lou Schmidt
President



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



2013 Officers

President	Mary Lou Schmidt	(802) 257-0233
Vice President	Dan Beloin	(603) 237-8633
Recording Secretary	Russell Reay	(802) 492-3323
Executive Secretary/Treas.	Jim Horst	(802) 447-1900
Past President	Jay Weir	(603) 237-8617

2013 Directors (Term Ends)

Dan Beloin	(603) 237-8633	(2012)
Mike Godzyk	(603) 237-5702	(2013)
Ben Hoyt	(603) 838-6403	(2013)
Tom Lang	(802) 223-7028	(2012)
Paul Lemire	(603) 882-8012	(2012)
Nigel Manley	(603) 444-6228	(2014)
Mary Lou Schmidt	(802) 257-0233	(2013)
Carl Szych	(802) 334-6858	(2014)
Jeff Taylor	(603) 239-4005	(2014)
Bill Tester	(802) 525-3814	(2012)
Bob White	(802) 899-4924	(2014)
Patrick White	(802) 223-4258	(2013)

Contact Information

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For matters related to Tree Line only:

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NHVTCTA Tree Line
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E-mail: pwhitevt@aol.com

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

2014 Tree Line Publication Schedule

Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline
January	Jan. 3
June	June 6
September	Sept. 5



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Christmas Tree DNA

Editor's Note: Below is an excerpt from a recent Associated Press article on strides researchers are making to map conifer DNA, which could be used by breeders to produce trees with desirable traits.

Scientists would love to identify the billions of building blocks that make up the DNA of a conifer. That's called sequencing its genome. Such analysis is a standard tool of biology, and doing it for conifers could reveal genetic secrets useful for basic science, breeding and forest management.

But the conifer genome is dauntingly huge. And like a big price tag on a wished-for present, that has put it out of reach.

Now, as Christmas approaches, it appears the conifer's role as a genetic Grinch may be ending.

In recent months, scientific teams in the United States and Canada have released preliminary, patchy descriptions of conifer genomes. And a Swedish team plans to follow suit soon in its quest for the Norway spruce. "The world changed for conifer

genetics," said David Neale of the University of California, Davis. It's "entering the modern era."

What happened? Credit the same recent technological advances that have some doctors predicting that someday, people will have their genomes sequenced routinely as part of medical care. The technology for that has gotten faster and much cheaper.

"Until just a few years ago, the idea of sequencing even a single conifer genome seemed impossible," said John MacKay of the University of Laval in Quebec City, who co-directs a multi-institution Canadian project that's tackling the white spruce. The new technologies changed that, he said.

How big is a conifer genome? Consider the 80-foot Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center in New York. It's a Norway spruce, so its genome is six times bigger than that of anybody skating below it. Other conifer genomes are even larger.

Nobody expects a perfect, finished conifer genome anytime soon. MacKay and others

say that reaching that goal would probably require some advances in technology. But even partial versions can help tree breeders and basic scientists, researchers say.

Why bother doing this? For breeders, "genomes can really help you speed up the process and simply do a better job of selecting trees, if you understand the genetic architecture of the traits you want to breed for," MacKay said.

To sequence a genome, scientists start by chopping DNA into small bits, and let their machines sequence each bit.

That's the part that has become much faster and cheaper in recent years. But then comes the task of re-assembling these bits back into the long DNA chains found in trees. And that is a huge challenge with conifers, because their DNA chains contain many repeated sequences that make the assembly a lot harder.

[In 2012], Neale's group presented partial results for the genome sequence of loblolly pine, based on DNA extracted from a single pine nut. It includes about a million disconnected chunks of DNA, and altogether it covers well over half the tree's genome.

Neale figures it will take his team until 2016 to complete genomes of the loblolly, Douglas-fir and sugar pine.

The project is financed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Mackay's group recently released its early results on DNA taken from a single white spruce.

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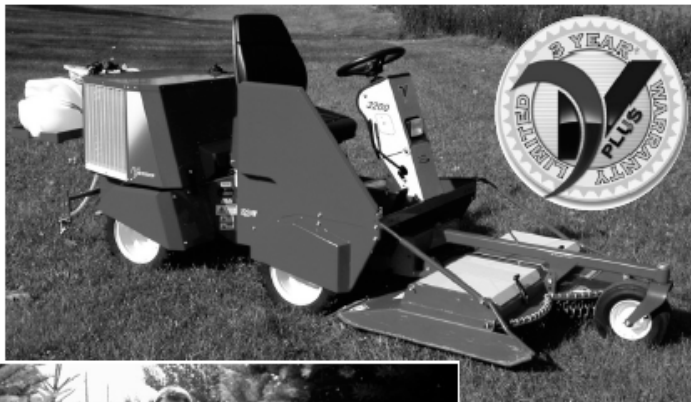
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Fair Season

Mike Dannehy sent in the following recap of the Christmas tree competition at the North Haverhill (NH) Fair:

“As usual, we had a successful showing of trees. Large crowds, great weather and a good variety of quality trees. George and Mary Gilbert took the “Best of Show” with a perfect tree (not the first time). This year we had the local 4H forestry group judge the trees. This worked well; they were very enthusiastic and did an excellent job. We also moved the display site to the main entrance and displayed the trees in conjunction with some antique ag equipment—this also worked well and we received many favorable comments. We always get a bushel of favorable comments at no cost



Mike Dannehy (right) and the 4H forestry group that judged the trees at the North Haverhill Fair.



The Christmas tree competition at the Champlain Valley Fair (VT) was also a success with 11 trees and numerous wreaths entered. Balsam fir, Cannaan fir, Fraser fir and Blue Spruce were some of the varieties entered. Peter Purinton took home “Best of Show” with a beautiful balsam and Joan White took top honors in both the wreath and centerpiece competitions. Tree judging will also be taking place at the upcoming Tunbridge World’s Fair (VT) and The Big E (in Massachusetts).

A beautiful and spacious display helped to promote farm-grown Christmas trees as part of the competition at the Champlain Valley Fair.

IR-4 Project and Product labeling

Since 1963, the IR-4 Project has been the major resource for supplying pest management tools for specialty crop growers by developing research data to support new EPA tolerances and labeled product uses.

The IR-4 Ornamentals Program develops efficacy and phytotoxicity data on disease, insect and weed management tools for use in greenhouses, nurseries, landscapes, interiorscapes, Christmas tree farms, sod

farms, the production of forestry tree seedlings and other non-food specialty crop uses.

The group works with growers, researchers, registrants and regulatory agencies to facilitate new product registrations. It also works to place new diseases, insects, and weeds as well as new crops on already registered ornamental horticulture product labels.

On the IR-4 Web site is a survey that is used to help focus

research prioritization by providing information about the diseases, insects, and weeds which impact your business.

The more Christmas tree growers who respond, the greater the chance that attention will be given ensuring that labeled products are available for this industry.

The survey can be completed at:
<http://ir4.rutgers.edu/Ornamental/Survey/index.cfm>

NCTA (continued)

Continued from page 1

and future of the industry.

(On a somewhat related note, see page 4 for more information on the TIP program.)

There is often a misconception that legislative and advocacy issues only affect larger growers, those who employ a certain number of workers or who use the H-2A program. Supporting Real Christmas Trees is not a major grower, choose & cut, wholesaler or retailer issue. It is the support and protection of the product that all members produce, no

matter how many trees you sell. NCTA can make a big difference on issues that affect our industry, but we need your help. Make your contribution to the Real Tree Advocacy Fund or Legislative Action Fund today by visiting www.christmastree.org or calling (636) 449-5070.

When contacting NCTA also ask about the group's special \$99 trial membership offer to show new members the benefits of belonging. It's not too late to take advantage of some of these benefits, including

- Discounts on products and services for your business,

- including email marketing, credit card processing, workers comp insurance, gift shop merchandise, website design and more;

- Subscription to the American Christmas Tree Journal, featuring industry news and trends, business advice, marketing ideas and production information (a \$58 value);

- Subscription to the new Advocacy Alerts and Tree Talk newsletter;

- Enhanced listing on the new NCTA Tree Locator, allowing consumers and/or retailers to find your business; and more.



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Fraser Fir: N.C. (Rogers Mtn.) Seed Source	Spring 2014	2-2	\$0.85
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Ayers) Seed Source	Spring 2014	2-2	\$0.85
Mystery Tree: Late-Breaking Fraser Fir	Spring 2014	2-2	\$1.00

Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source—SOLD OUT

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

Winter Meeting Plans

We still have to get through the sales season, but for those planning ahead the NHVTCTA's Winter Meeting will be held Tuesday, Jan. 28, once again at the Champlain Valley Expo in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show.

A survey of members as to location preference for the winter meeting showed a range of views. For the coming year the directors have voted to keep the same location as the past several years, but in the future the winter meeting



may be held in alternating years at the New Hampshire Farm and Forest Expo in Manchester, or at a central location.

At the Vermont Farm Show this year, the NHVTCTA will have its own booth

and a greater effort will be placed on the tree competition. The Farm Show board sought the input of the NHVTCTA as to tree category and prize amounts; expect news on the format of this year's competi-

NH Farm and Forest Opportunity

NHVTCTA member Paul Lemire is looking for photos of members' farms to display at this year's Farm and Forest Expo will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester, N.H. on February 7 and 8, 2014. It's a great chance to promote your operation. Please help show off your farm by sending pictures/captions to Paul Lemire, at 19 Talent Road, Litchfield, N.H. 03052 or emailing mrrplemire@msn.com

tion in our January newsletter. Trees will be able to be delivered the morning of our meeting, so plan now to enter.

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TIP Program

The National Christmas Tree Association's board has voted unanimously to increase TIP state members dues from \$20 to \$25, effective in 2014. The \$20 cost had been in place since the program was implemented nearly 20 years ago. Originally based on the average retail price of one tree at that time, the dues have not kept pace with the corresponding cost to provide them, as well as the cost of one tree.

What is the TIP program?

The Tree Industry Partnership (TIP) was started in 1995 as a way for the national association to work together with state/regional associations to protect and advocate on behalf of the Real Tree Industry.

Since then, TIP contributions have been used to fund a variety of industry programs, including consumer and industry research, holiday safety education, legislative and regulatory efforts, environmental action, the White House Tree presentation and more. While the number of threats facing the Real Tree Industry has increased over the years, the rate charged associations per member has not.

As of 2013, there are 23 state/regional associations supporting TIP, including the NHVT Christmas Tree Association. Others associations taking part include California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Inland Empire, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pacific North-

west, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Southern Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

What are the obligations?

Each participating state/regional association is asked to submit \$25 per member and provide NCTA with a current member list annually to ensure that its members receive all of their TIP benefits.

What are the benefits?

The TIP program helps fund valuable protection and advocacy work that could not be easily accomplished on a local level. TIP programs, such as efforts to improve and maintain fair fire codes, support legislation and regulations conducive to the growth of small business and our industry, combat misinformation about farm-grown Christmas trees and conduct industry research benefit *all* Christmas tree professionals.

In addition, each state association member in a participating TIP state receives the following benefits:

- A free, basic listing (wholesale or retail) on the NCTA Tree Locator at www.christmastree.org.
- The option of upgrading to an enhanced listing for \$15/year and adding a Weblink for \$25/year.
- Discounted subscription rate for the *American Christmas Tree Journal*.
- Regular Advocacy Alerts on important regulatory and legislative actions that may impact your business, and how to take action on them.

Currently, \$20 of each NHVTCTA member's dues is forwarded on as part of the TIP program described on this page.

With that figure set to increase to \$25, and to provide flexibility in its budgeting, at its recent meeting, NHVTCTA Directors voted to recommend a by-law change. All members should have received an email explaining this.

By-laws may be amended or revised by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any meeting of the Association, provided that notice of such amendment or revision shall have been mailed to all members prior to that meeting.) Specifically, it is proposed that Article I, Section 2 of the By-Laws (which sets exact dollar amounts for each category of membership and for TIP contributions) be amended as follows:

Section 2: The cost of annual dues shall be proposed from time to time by the Board of Directors, and shall be voted upon by the membership in conjunction with annual budget approval in accordance with Article V, Section 1 of the Constitution.

Two factors entered into this proposed change. 1) The TIP assessment is set by the National Christmas Tree Association rather than NHVTCTA. NHVTCTA has no say in the amount of this assessment. We either accept it or reject it in its entirety and; 2) Section 2 as currently worded is both restrictive and somewhat redundant. As part of its budget review and preparation process the Board of Directors examines all income and expenses and makes recommendations to the full NHVTCTA membership.

The proposed annual budget, including proposed dues, is voted upon by the full membership at its annual meeting each fall. In this way the membership has the ultimate say in setting annual dues. It seems overly restrictive to require a constitutional change every time the cost of dues is considered.

There will be ample time for questions and discussion of this matter prior to a vote to be taken at our Fall meeting at Elysian Hill in Dummerston, Vt., on September 21.

Affordable Care Act Deadline

The National Christmas Tree Association has just issued the following reminder for employers regarding health care:

Section 18B of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), as added by section 1512 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), provides that an employer must provide each employee at the time of hiring, or with respect to current employees, not later than October 1, 2013, a written notice. This deadline for current employees is fast approaching. This obligation covers nearly every employer regardless of size; regardless of whether you provide health insurance to your employee or not; and, regardless if you will be required to or not.

The notice must include:

— Inform the employee of the existence of the Marketplace (referred to in the statute as the Exchange) including a description of the services provided by the Marketplace, and the manner in which the em-

ployee may contact the Marketplace to request assistance;

— If the employer plan's share of the total allowed costs of benefits provided under the plan is less than 60 percent of such costs, that the employee may be eligible for a premium tax credit under section 36B of the Internal Revenue Code (the Code) if the employee purchases a qualified health plan through the Marketplace; and

— If the employee purchases a qualified health plan through the Marketplace, the employee may lose the employer contribution (if any) to any health benefits plan offered by the employer and that all or a portion of such contribution may be excludable from income for Federal income tax purposes.

There are model notices provided by the federal government that employers can use, although an employer can choose to do their own.

There are model notices for employers who do offer a plan (<http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/>

[FLSAwithplans.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/FLSAwithplans.pdf)) and for employers who do not offer a plan (<http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/FLSAwithoutplans.pdf>).

The requirement applies to “almost every employer” because the obligation to notify is based on the FLSA definition of employee. In general, the FLSA applies to employers that employ one or more employees who are engaged in, or produce goods for, interstate commerce. For most firms, a test of not less than \$500,000 in annual dollar volume of business applies.

The notice must be provided in writing in a manner appropriate to be understood by the average employee. It may be provided by first-class mail. Alternatively, it may be provided electronically to those who typically have email access as part of their work situation.

There is no specific penalty for noncompliance. There may be FLSA or PPACA general reporting compliance penalties that apply, though it is not entirely clear which ones might apply.

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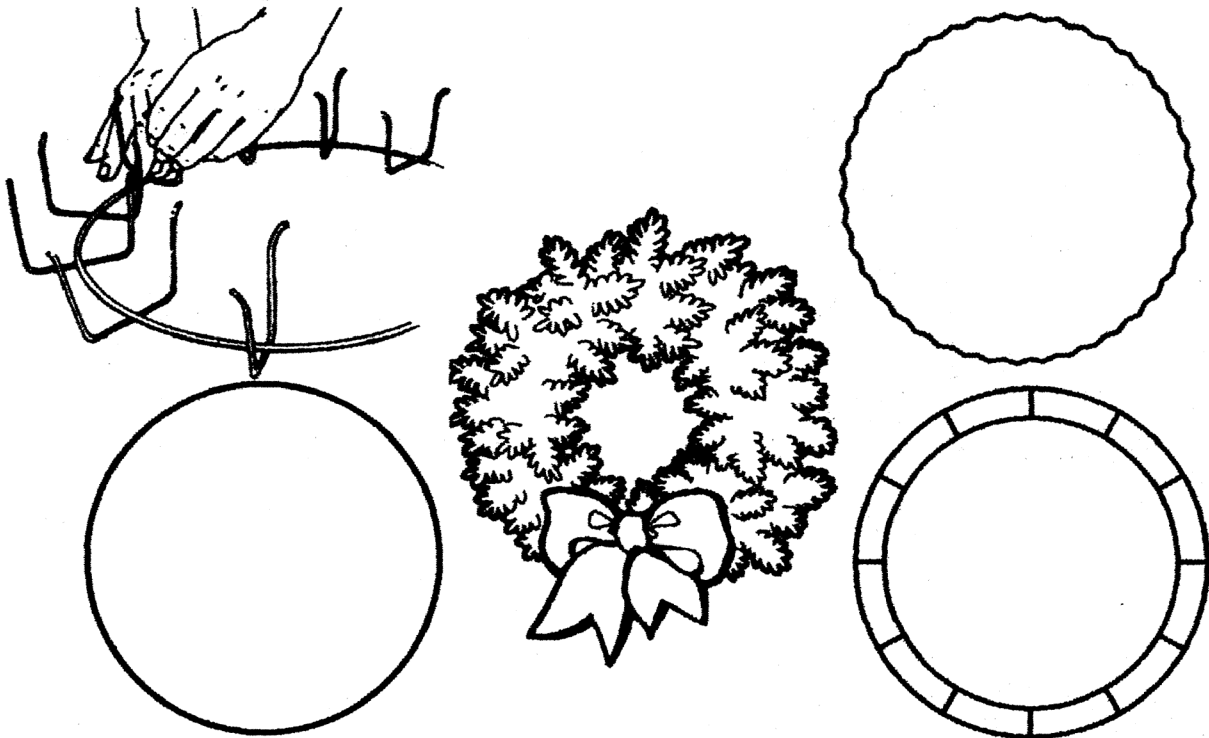
Farm for Sale

NHVTCTA member Rob Loker was in touch with news that Sundance Farm in Farmington, N.H., is for sale. “Regrettably, we are not getting any younger and the work is not getting any lighter,” he noted. The listing can be viewed at <http://www.kw.com/homes-for-sale/03835/NH/Farmington/434-Hornetown-Road/3yd-NNERENNH-4240494.html> or call Rob at 603-859-7153 for more details.

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Editor's Desk

Following is a look at some of the news that's crossed my desk since our last issue...

Col. Herbert Hunt Jr.

SOUTH BARRE, VT — Long-time Christmas tree grower and NHVTCTA member Col. Herbert Gage Hunt Jr., 90, USAR Retired, died June 24.



Herb and his wife worked together at their dairy and tree farm on Route 14 in South Barre for many years.

He was a veteran of U.S. Army service during World War II, the Korean Conflict

and the Vietnam War. Herb was a Pearl Harbor survivor and served in the Pacific Theater of operations with distinction.

Besides his wife, Violet, he leaves two daughters and two sons.

Jean S. Peterson
CHELSEA, VT — Jean S. Peterson, wife of Walt Rockwood and stepmother of Rich Rockwood, died Monday, Aug. 12, at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover, N.H., with her husband and children by her side.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Jean's name to the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Norris Cotton Cancer Center, 1 Medical Center Drive, Lebanon, N.H. 03756.

Trading Post

FOR SALE: Wreath shipping boxes, 18" x 18" x 6", white boxes with red bow design, strapped in bundles of 25, \$2.00 each. Will deliver to NHVTCTA meeting at Elysian Hills on September 21. Russell Reay, (802) 492-3323, email russreay@vermontel.net

WANTED: Looking for a used 22/23 inch netter; if you have one that you no longer use please call Paul Lemire at 603-759-2264

WANTED: Kelco boxing equipment. Curious if anyone has various size cones/funnels for the Kelco tree boxing (not netting) system they would be interested in selling. Also interested in other boxing equipment for shipping trees. Contact Patrick White, (802) 223-4258 or email pwhitevt@aol.com



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