

Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

September 2018

Special points of interest:

◆ **Upcoming Meetings**

The Winter 2019 meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 29, once again in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction, Vt.

◆ **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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Fall Meeting at Beloin Tree Farm

The Fall meeting of the NHVTCTA will be held on Saturday, Sept. 22, at Beloin Tree Farm in Colebrook, N.H.

Following the morning business meeting, Rex Korson, vice chair of the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, will be on hand to provide an update on that group's efforts and the recent nationwide vote.

Jonathan Ebba, landscaping and greenhouse specialist with UNH will be on hand to provide guidance for growers on establishing their own seedling supply with a small-scale nursery.

Insects and diseases (with an emphasis on invasives and fungus problems) will be focus of presentations by retired Vermont forest and insect disease specialist Ron Kelley and Chloe Gendre, agrologist and technical consultant with Club Agro-environnemental de l'Estrie in Quebec.

After lunch, host Dan Beloin will join Kelley and Gendre for a tour of the farm, with a look at everything from basal pruning, fungal disease control, and shearing to modifying equipment and hand tools, homemade trailers for hauling trees upright, and growing trees on land that wouldn't be much good for anything else.

Dan Beloin explains that Beloin Tree Farm is a family-owned and operated business that started in 1948: "My parents moved to Colebrook, N.H. From East Hereford, Quebec, Canada, and bought a 520-acre dairy farm. Farming and logging were the primary operations with Christmas trees as a sideline. The cows are long gone now, having been sold in 1982. Since then we have focused all our energy into the tree business."

"We now have over 300 acres of Christmas trees in various stages of production. Mostly it is balsam fir with about 100 acres in fraser fir. A few acres have been planted in Canaan fir, blue spruce, Korean fir, and some Blue Myeri Spruce to spice up our choose and cut and retail operations. Our wholesale trees are graded as Premium, No.1, and No.2's. We are currently harvesting approximately 10,000 trees per year and increasing steadily. At full production we expect to reach 15,000 trees per year and maintain it for years to come."

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.

President's Message

In the middle of this newsletter you'll find an insert that describes the many benefits—including good company—of belonging to the NH-VT Christmas Tree Association. Because you're reading this, you already know how much fellow members are willing to share and help, and how much valuable information gets shared at meetings.

We're hoping you might take a moment to drop this sheet off with someone in the Christmas tree business who doesn't already belong to the association. Maybe a neighbor who grows trees, a farm just starting up that you drive by on your way to work, even an equipment or fertilizer supplier who sells to Christmas tree growers but would like to expand their market.

Every organization is challenged to find new members, and there are plenty of slick marketing materials and outreach efforts that can be

tried. But, as Vermont director Andy Aldrich pointed out at a recent directors meeting, sometimes the best way to get a new member is with a simple, personal invitation. Hence, this effort.

So please, take the sheet in this newsletter, put it in your car, and the next time you're driving by that Christmas tree farm you've seen, take a minute to stop by, drop it off, and tell them how membership in this group has saved you money, helped you grow better trees and avoid making mistakes, and make some good friends. If every member looks to recruit one new member, we'll all benefit from the additional voices and perspectives.

Thanks, and look forward to seeing all of you at Beloin Tree Farm for our fall meeting.

*Patrick White,
President*



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



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President	Patrick White	pwhitevt@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.

2019 Tree Line Publication Schedule

Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline
January	Jan. 4
June	June 7
September	Sept. 6

Customer Service Tips

Editor's Note: Growing nice trees is important, but so is selling them. With that in mind, and with sales season quickly approaching, I came across these great tips on customer service (from consultant Micah Solomon, micahsolomon.com, published in Forbes) excerpted here. They apply to choose and cut farms, wholesalers, online sellers—and to both owners and employees.

1. First impressions matter. Walk up to, and into, your establishment with the eye of a customer. A customer perception is his reality, and a first impression is important because it tends to linger in a customer's memory. Ditto if that first interaction is on the phone.

2. Impressions before the first impression matter...the first impression is very likely happening before you realize it: how you're portrayed online, how your grounds look well before the front door. Disney even obsesses over the route to their parks for this reason.

3. Last impressions matter. It's so easy when you've "completed" an interaction with a customer, to rush on to the next one with the next customer. Doing so can erase all the goodwill you created. The "goodbye" is an important stage, one of the most important, because (like a first impression) it tends to linger in a customer's memory.

4. Are you easy to use? You won't know until you try. Try your own

website. Is it easy? Or a pain? Come in the front door and see if the door swings open easily, or whacks you on the shoulder. And so forth.

5. Do you offer self-service options for your customers? Many customers want them today: unless you're open 24/7 or at least all conceivable business hours in all time zones in which you have customers, you need such options. And even if you are open 'round the clock, many times customers today just want to handle it, or at least be able to check up on it, themselves.

6. Do your self-service options include escape hatches? For when the self-service isn't working or the customer isn't in the

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Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2019	2-2	\$1.10
Balsam-Fraser Hybrids: Vermont Seed Source	Spring 2019	2-2	\$1.10
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Rogers Mtn.) Seed Source	Spring 2019	2-2	\$1.10—SOLD OUT
Mystery Tree: Late-Breaking Fraser Fir	Spring 2019	2-2	\$1.25—SOLD OUT
Canaan Fir: West Virginia Seed Source	Spring 2019	2-2	\$1.20
Questions?? Contact Bill Asack evenings 6-8 p.m.	1-802-754-6934		

Customer Service Tips (continued)

Continued from page 3

mood—there should be an easy way out, to reach a human. Make it obvious, like hitting “O” on the phone.

7. Do your customers have to ask you to answer questions for which the answer should be obvious? Customers don’t like to be burdened to contact you for items that could easily be provided for them on a self service basis. Do your FAQ’s actually include the questions that customers want the answers to? Or were they written six years ago? Do they get an auto-confirmation when they order or do they need to call to ensure their order wasn’t lost in the ether? And so on.

8. Timeliness: Are you considerate of your customer’s time? This is a big, big, big one. A perfect product or service delivered late is a defect.

9. Commit to continuous customer service education. Education is an investment in organizational development.

10. Get rid of the fine print. To a customer, fine print is where a company hides something that will protect them from a dissatisfied customer. Better to fix it than hide it.

11. Define a simple service recovery process. Things will go wrong. Either objectively (whatever that means) or in the eyes of your customer. Either way, you need a plan.

12. Consider the feedback you receive from your customers “free customer service consulting”—this is info of great value, not an interruption of your day. What could be better than to get information directly from your customers? And yet, responding to

it, reviewing it, acting on it can feel like an interruption of our work if we don’t carefully check our attitude. Also: Don’t review [feedback] at the end of the month—scan them right away to see who needs to hear from you now.

13. Reward and Recognize. Acknowledge the contributions of [employees] with formal and informal recognition.

14. ... But don’t think that’s why they’re working for you: Incentives for your customer-facing employees can’t replace the general value of hiring people who like people, and treating those people every single day like the professionals who they are.

15. Benchmark outside your industry. If you sell furniture, don’t just benchmark other players in the furniture industry to figure out how fast, easy to use, nice your company should be. Your customers’ expectations for manners, timeliness, quality... come as much from Starbucks, Apple, and other great consumer brands as they do from the others in your particular field.

16. Commit to continuous improvement. Ask yourself at the end of the day, “What is the thing you are going to do tomorrow to make your team better.”

17. Language matters. It is extremely easy to say the right thing, but to say it wrong. Actively work on the language that is used in customer interactions

18. Standards matter. For example, a doorman at a great hotel is rarely blindsided by a guest trying to enter while the doorman’s back is turned. How can that be? Standards. In this case, the standard is usually that “doormen work in teams.” They quite literally have each other’s back, leading to a consistently comfortable, welcoming, hospitable experience.

19. Empowerment matters. You can’t write a standard for every eventuality. Your employees need empowerment—autonomy—to deviate from it if the case, the customer, requires a different approach.

20. Fight actively—every single day, every single shift—against getting in a rut...keep your attitude fresh to match [customers’].

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The New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



Join Today!

Since 1956, New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association members have collaborated to cultivate the industry—sharing information about current growing practices, educating consumers about the many benefits of real trees, and promoting the production of high-quality, fresh, farm-grown Christmas trees.

Whether you are a large or small Christmas tree grower, wreath-maker, operate tree sales lots, or sell equipment, supplies or materials to these groups, **you should belong to the NH-VT Christmas Tree Association!**

The NH-VT Christmas Tree Association **meets three times each year**, with Spring and Fall meetings taking place at members' farms, and a January meeting held in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show. Typical meeting agendas include such topics as **planting, shearing, selling, marketing, bookkeeping and taxation, mechanization, fertilization, insect and disease problems and controls, and labor and legislative issues. Meetings also offer a chance to earn the credits required to maintain a pesticide applicators license.**

The Association publishes a **newsletter**, *Tree Line*, which keeps members updated three times each year. The Association also assists members in marketing their trees and wreaths with an **online member listing** that directs customers—whether wholesale or choose and cut—to your farm.

Most importantly, the Association offers a forum to **make some good friends and learn from other experienced growers**. For more information or questions, call (802) 447-0660 or email info@nh-vtchristmastree.org



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION NH-VT CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

FARM NAME/COMPANY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (see back for categories/dues): _____

MAIL FORM/PAYMENT TO: NH-VTCTA, 569 Pleasant Valley Rd., Bennington, VT 05201

For more information, visit www.nh-vtchristmastree.org or call (802) 447-0660

The New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

Join Today!



NH-VT CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

(See other side for application form)

Regular – Directly engaged in any phase of growing or handling Christmas Trees or related products (\$80.00 per year).

Spousal – Husband or wife of regular member (\$25.00 per year).

Employee – Bona fide full or part time employee of regular member (\$25.00 per year).

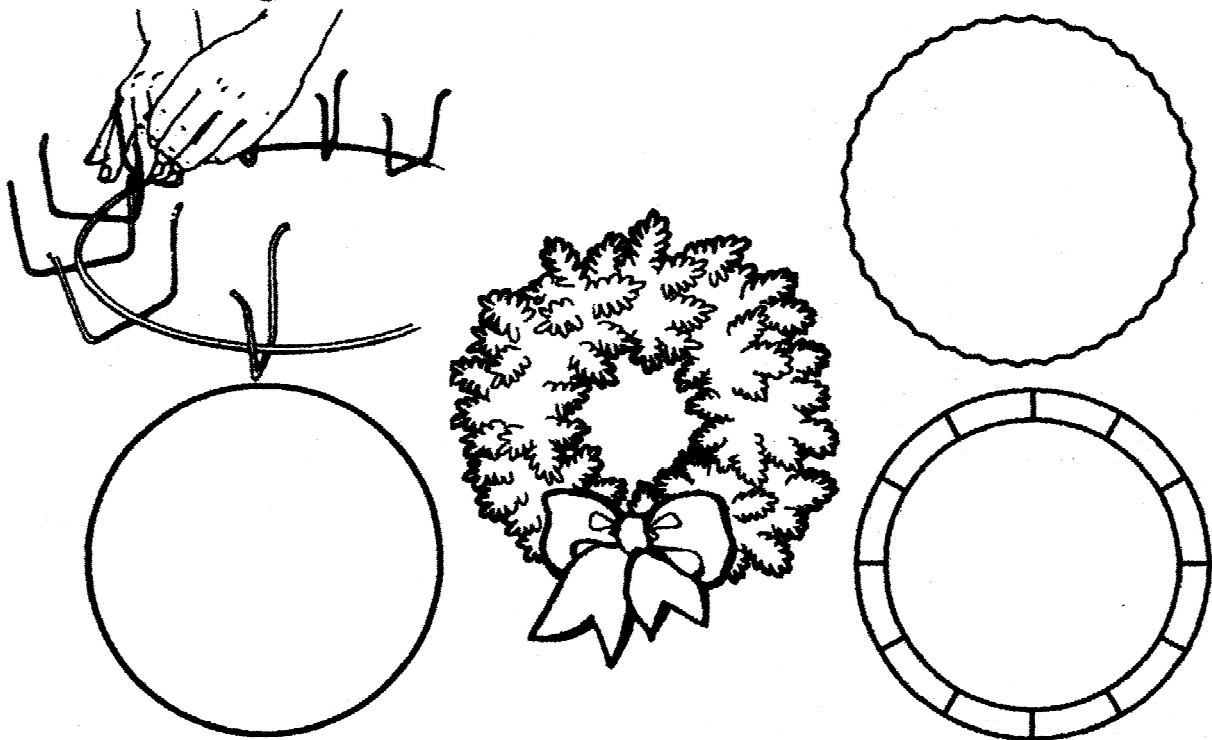
Youth – Person 18 years of age or younger directly engaged in any phase of the industry (\$10.00 per year).

Associate – Interested person who is a non-grower or non-handler of trees, wreaths or related

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Christmas Trees in the News

Bring A Tree to the Fall Meeting

Please remember to bring a tree to the upcoming Fall meeting for the annual NHVTCTA Tree Competition. This is a contest for members, and judged by members. It's fun and educational and a good chance to see what other growers are doing!

Checkoff Vote

The Christmas tree checkoff program was recently approved for continuation in a nationwide vote. While such a vote would normally continue the program for seven more years before another vote, because this vote was narrow (with 51 percent of eligible voters saying yes), the USDA

has announced that growers will again be asked to vote on the program's continuation in about one year. Rex Korson, vice chair of the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, will be on hand to provide an update at the NHVTCTA fall meeting.

Good Guidebooks

Thanks to Bob White for bringing to our attention a great resource available through Michigan State University. The *IPM Pocket Guide for Weed Identification in Christmas Trees* is a handy little booklet that is designed specifically for Christmas tree growers and includes detailed, close-up photos to help identify weeds. The book can be

ordered (and the information is available online) at: http://www.canr.msu.edu/ipm/agriculture/christmas_trees/identifying_weeds_in_christmas_trees

A good companion piece is Michigan State's guide to Weed Control in Christmas Trees, which can be downloaded online or also purchased at: http://shop.msu.edu/product_p/bulletin-e3237.htm

Trees for Troops

The NHVTCTA will once again take part in the national Trees for Troops effort. More information will be available at the Fall meeting, or you can email Nigel Manley at info@therocks.org

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Amazon.com to Begin Selling Real Christmas Trees

Editor's Note: If you haven't heard the news, the Associated Press recently reported that Amazon is getting into the real Christmas tree business.

Watch out for the 7-foot box on the doorstep. Amazon plans to sell and ship fresh, full-size Christmas trees this year.

But a live tree is no paperback book. Amazon says the Christmas trees, including Douglas firs and Norfolk Island pines, will be bound and shipped without water in the usual sort of box. Amazon said they'll be sent within 10 days of being cut down, possibly even sooner, and should survive the shipping just fine.

Amazon.com said the trees,

wreaths and garlands will go on sale in November. Some will qualify for Prime free shipping, and Amazon will offer pre-orders so shoppers can choose a delivery date.

The company sold trees shorter than 3 feet last year, and some other merchants sold bigger ones using its platform as a marketplace. But this is the first year Amazon is offering the larger trees itself.

"Given the popularity among customers, we increased the assortment," the company said.

A 7-foot Fraser fir from a North Carolina farm will cost \$115, according to an Amazon holiday preview book. Also listed are a \$50 wreath and a \$25 red-leaved plant with a decorative

candy cane speared into the soil.

Will people buy a Christmas tree sight unseen? Tim O'Connor, the executive director of the National Christmas Tree Association, said picking out a tree and hauling it back home is part of the fun for families. The association estimates that only about 1 to 2 percent of the 27 million real Christmas trees purchased last year were bought online, mostly from grower's own sites. "It's so small, it's almost undetectable," O'Connor said.

But Amazon has a history of shaking up shopping habits. It changed how people buy books, diapers and many other goods. It recently expanded the selection of live plants it sells, including potted succulents and orchids.

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Trading Post

FOR SALE:

Dana and Jane Blais have sold their trees and are in the process of selling their farm, Hidden Meadows Christmas Tree Farm. They



have the following equipment for sale. Hardi BNL 53 sprayer \$750. Vicon spreader, \$750. Christmas tree baler, heavy duty on wheels with three cones, 12", 16" and 20" \$750. Christmas tree baler, table-top, 23", three years old, like new bolted, to very heavy, custom-made metal table, \$325 for both. Display lights, two strings of outdoor lights, 100 ft. each, with sockets every 10 ft.; one new in box, one lightly used, \$100 each. Large, rugged, weather-proof banner that says "Christmas Tree Farm," 3.5 ft. x 15 ft., \$50. Heavy wooden, stand-alone sign for displaying Christmas wreaths on two sides, \$50. Two "Open" flags, excellent condition, \$10 each or 2/\$17. Tyvek tags for Christmas trees or wreaths, box of 500-plus, \$25. Items are at 253 Hill Road, Bath, NH 03740. For more information, call (603) 747-2263.

FOR SALE: 18" Kelco fiberglass netting cone. Can be mounted to table or bench. \$150 or best offer. Contact Gordon Bradstreet at 603-543-6341 or email jgbrdsttr@yahoo.com.

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