

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

& Limbs & Needles

Serving the Christmas Tree Industry in the South

INSIDE:

Regulatory Pests in Christmas Trees

EHS: Regulatory Shipping Update

Grower Survey Reflects Optimism and Growth

CTPB: Report to the Industry

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The mission of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association is to promote "real" Christmas trees through marketing and education. We will contribute to the success of the Christmas Tree Industry by providing ethical, professional, and visionary leadership.

Limbs & Needles

Keeping Christmas Real Since 1959

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Front Cover Photo: "The 2018 Official White House Christmas Tree"
Photo courtesy of NCCTA.

The editors will not be responsible for the content of articles not written by them. Limbs & Needles will try to return articles and pictures if requested but will not accept responsibility if these items are misplaced.

Subscriptions are \$25 per year for members of southeastern Christmas tree associations and \$35 per year for all others.

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President's Message

Dale Cornett



Happy Spring to everyone!

Hopefully, this year will be drier than last and we can get into the fields to start planting soon!

Many thanks to all of the sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees who supported the 2019 Winter Meeting that was held at the Meadowbrook Inn in Blowing Rock on February 21st and 22nd. There were many informative topics covered during the meeting such as what you need to know about DOL Wage and Hour and Compliance Audits, Elongate Hemlock Scale Host Study Updates, Containerized Tree Seedling Production, and much more. Our sponsorship totals exceeded \$9,000. This, along with the support of allied business members and fellow growers, allowed us to reach our income budget.

On a personal note, thanks to those who covered for me while I addressed some medical issues this winter. I appreciate Rodney, Jennifer, Amber and all others who fulfilled my responsibilities. Thanks for your thoughts and prayers.

Be sure to save the date for the 2019 Summer Meeting which will be held in Avery County on August 16th and 17th. Jerry Moody and the Avery County Christmas tree growers are already working hard to plan an exciting meeting and farm tour. We look forward to seeing you there as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the NCCTA.

From a wholesale pricing standpoint, 2018 was a great year but I'm sure we all wish we had more trees that we could have sold! As we move forward over the next few years, supply will still be limited but we must remain proactive in our marketing during the good times to survive the bad. The Christmas Tree Promotion Board is essential to the REAL Christmas Tree Industry, not only from a promotional standpoint, but also from a research one. Please carefully read the Promotion Board research updates starting on page 33 to establish an informed opinion. I encourage you to think about the importance of the research and promotion and vote YES in April. 🌲

Growing Your Business?

There's still time to Advertise in our 2019 Choose & Cut Memories Guide

The NCCTA Choose & Cut Memories directory is distributed to all NC chambers and visitors centers, at consumer trade shows and is featured in numerous print promotions.



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Why Should I Become a Member of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association?



To promote the traditions and memories of celebrating Christmas with a Real Tree.



To protect and grow your business. NCCTA works to stop legislation and regulations that are negative to you and others growing, wholesaling and retailing Real Christmas Trees and to support beneficial legislation and regulations.



To be part of a community of Christmas Tree professionals and share the knowledge and experiences of thousands who share your concerns, questions and needs.



Special Benefits for NCCTA Members

- **PayAnywhere:** Credit card processing that helps support NCCTA with every swipe.
- **First Pioneer Insurance Agency:** Offers a special worker's compensation insurance program.
- **LifeStore Insurance:** Insurance discounts offered to members for property and liability coverage, workers compensation and health plan options.
- **Auto Owners:** NCCTA Members which will save 10% on all Commercial Lines of insurance (ie: Commercial Auto, General Liability, Inland Marine Equipment Coverage and Farm Property).
- **First Benefits:** NCCTA members are eligible for workers' compensation coverage with no other membership requirements. (LifeStore Insurance and First Pioneer Insurance represent First Benefits Insurance at their respective agencies in the High Country).

Membership Benefits

- ✓ Listing with link to your own website on www.NCchristmastrees.com where over 92,000 visitors search for Christmas trees annually.
- ✓ Annual listing in the Buy-Sell Guide that promotes REAL trees to thousands of buyers
- ✓ Annual listing in the Choose and Cut Directory that promotes REAL trees to thousands of consumers
- ✓ You will receive an annual subscription (two issues) of Limbs & Needles Magazine; keeping you up-to-date on association news, technical information, Christmas tree research information, and industry updates and marketing & management tips.
- ✓ Updated tree inventory listing available on website after September 1
- ✓ Retail lot listing on website with Google location services
- ✓ Access to NCCTA's Online Member Center, with resources such as classifieds, wholesale buyer mailing list, choose & cut promotional mailing list, and digital archived copies of Limbs & Needles
- ✓ Attention to relevant legislative issues on State and National Level
- ✓ NCCTA funded research projects through NCSU & NCDA&CS are beneficial for success and growth.
- ✓ Local, regional, state, and national advertising
- ✓ Expanded promotional opportunities and organizational planning through Specialty Crop Block Grants obtained by the NCCTA
- ✓ Access to free retailer promotional materials provided through grant funding
- ✓ Representation at Industry Trade Shows and Consumer Shows where the Buy-Sell and Choose & Cut Memories publications are distributed.
- ✓ Use of the NCCTA logo and the NCCTA trademark design "North Carolina Fraser Fir, The Perfect Christmas Tree"
- ✓ Representation with educational and governmental organizations
- ✓ Access to experts in the field – speakers, other members, sponsors
- ✓ Provides great opportunities to meet and network with industry peers
- ✓ Reduced registration rates for annual Winter and Summer meetings where industry leaders share information and insights, and growers interact and share their individual experience.
- ✓ NCTA T.I.P. benefits
- ✓ You will be a part of North Carolina's voice for the Christmas tree industry. Whether that means presenting a Christmas tree to the Governor, meeting with legislators regarding concerns for our industry, or participating in promotional opportunities in the media, NCCTA members have visibility and a voice.



Executive Director's Report

Jennifer Greene



The course of change in this digital age can easily outpace any marketing and promotional campaign based on targeting traditional media outlets. Christmas tree promotion is no exception. Marketing activities and the technology that supports them quickly become outdated or completely miss the mark.

A new generation of families presently draw on fundamentally different sources of information to develop their own Christmas holiday purchasing traditions. The millennial generation (the ascending market segment for Christmas trees) represents a unique audience where YouTube is more powerful than newspapers and holds greater authority regarding product performance than Consumer Reports. On their own, few farmers have the time or are equipped to stay current with this new landscape of social media.

In 2019-2020, the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association will build on previous successful Specialty Crop Block Grant projects by expanding promotional content available for Social media, especially in the form of short videos, by expanding promotional offerings across a range of social media platforms, and by upgrading computer systems to make promotional content more accessible to mobile devices and more user-friendly to the next generation of consumers.

Additional project activities will include hiring an intern to assist with managing and expanding the NCCTA's social media presence, as this has proven to be an effective way to enhance our marketing strategy; and a website update that will help create a more customer-centered palette that is visually appealing and engag-

ing to the target audience as well as providing ease of access from mobile devices. In lieu of expensive trade shows, the NCCTA will purchase an updated wholesale distribution list. Distribution lists are a far smaller investment and have proven to be an effective means of reaching a much larger base of potential wholesale buyers. Postcards and emails promoting North Carolina Fraser fir will be sent to contacts.

If you don't already follow the NCCTA on social media, I encourage you to do so. It is a great way to stay up-to-date with the activities of the Association, as well as a great way to connect your farm and take advantage of the benefits that NCCTA offers you as a member. 🌲

A blue rounded rectangle containing the text "Fan Us or follow us!" in large, light blue font. Below the text are icons for Twitter and Facebook. At the bottom, it says "Visit Our Website To Link To Us" and "www.NCchristmastrees.com" in white text.

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or follow us!**

Visit Our Website To Link To Us
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See the Latest News: NCCTA.blogspot.com
See highlights from the 2019 Winter Meeting on page 42.

WWW.NCCHRISTMASTREES.COM



National News

Wilson Barr

2018 NCTA Recap

NCTA delivered the White House Christmas tree in November as the official start of the Christmas season. NCTA 2018 Champion grower Larry Smith, Mountain Top Fraser Fir, Newland, North Carolina delivered the Blue Room tree to President and Mrs. Trump at the White House on November 19. The event was highly covered by the media as the horse drawn wagon brought the tree up the White House driveway where the President and First Lady inspected it and visited with Larry Smith's family and friends in attendance at the presentation. Over 2 million visitors saw the tree in person during the Christmas season. The Estes family, the Reserve Champion growers, delivered the tree to the Vice President's residence. The industry and real Christmas trees receive a very large amount of publicity from this important program.

265,000 consumers visited our website to locate where to purchase a real Christmas tree and how to take proper care of it.

NCTA serves as the "Voice of the Industry" during November and December fielding hundreds of phone calls and emails from the media seeking information on numerous Christmas tree topics.

Many of the topics the media was interested in 2018 were negative:

- There is a Christmas tree shortage.
- Bugs could be on your Christmas tree.
- Mold in Christmas trees create allergy problems for many people.
- Christmas trees start fires in homes.
- Christmas trees pose risks for pets.

NCTA provides accurate information to the media and is often able to turn negative stories ideas into positive press. Unfortunately, not all media outlets contact us before they publish inaccurate or sensational informa-

tion. NCTA follows up to attempt to correct inaccurate and harmful articles and minimize their reoccurrence in the future. Consumers also contact NCTA to seek tips on caring for their trees and help with problems.

NCTA continues to advocate on behalf of the industry; recently working with other agriculture groups to complete the passage and signing into law of the Farm Bill. It was a long legislative effort that took most of 2017 and 2018. Overall, the new law is a significant win for the Christmas tree industry, with stable or increased funding for key programs such as the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, Specialty Crop Block Grants, and Plant Pest & Disease Prevention and Disaster Management. Also included are expanded provisions on greenhouse crop insurance as well as plant breeders' rights.

Along the way to completion of the Farm Bill, NCTA worked on report language for nursery and Christmas tree crop disaster programs and other elements as the bill was being developed in the House Ag Committee. The NCTA actively opposed a detrimental amendment that was proposed to legislation, which was pulled.

NCTA signed on to a Senate letter seeking an \$8 million increase in specialty crop research funding which would enable a 50 percent increase in the number of projects funded.

NCTA signed onto a letter with other ag groups to respectfully urge that Congress complete work on the Pesticide Registration Improvement Extension Act of 2018 (PRIA). The reauthorization of PRIA is essential in ensuring that growers and users of pesticides have timely access to products that help them produce the products the world depends on.

NCTA's efforts to ease the industry's pain on the labor front continue. Top current priorities are cap relief for the H-2B visa program and relief from the onerous new H-2A wages bearing down on many of our growers as the new season starts.

NCTA will continue to push for additional flexibility measures for trucking Hours of Service rules in 2019 in connection with the Electronic Logging Device (ELD) Mandate. A key priority will be explicit inclusion

of the horticulture industry in the agricultural exemption, as determined by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

NCTA engaged the Missouri Department of Insurance seeking to eliminate Christmas tree burning demonstrations as part of their insurance agent continuing education program.

Trees for Troops had another successful year in 2018! The 14th year of the program saw 16,599 trees delivered to 71 military bases in the US and across the world. The 14 year total of real Christmas trees donated to military members and families = 225,319. The Christmas SPIRIT Foundation would like to thank all of the participating growers, customers and farms. We would also like to thank all of our sponsors especially FedEx.

The Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association will host the 2019 NCTA meeting and National Christmas Tree contest August 8-10, 2019 in conjunction with their meeting at Roba Family Farms, North Abington Township, PA, similar to the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association's hosting of the 2017 NCTA meeting and National Christmas Tree contest. 🌲

National Christmas Tree Association

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Legislative Update

Pat Gaskin



Opening Remarks

The balance of power has shifted to a divided government in Washington, D.C. Democrats won control of the House of Representatives and Republicans won the Senate by a slim majority.

In the North Carolina General assembly, Republicans still have control of the House and Senate, but do not have a veto-proof supermajority over the Democrat Governor.

At the federal level, 14 of the 15 North Carolina Representatives returned to Washington. In the fiercely contested 9th district race, the North Carolina Board of Elections did not certify a winner, but decided to hold a new primary in May with the election in June 2019.

2018 Farm Bill

Congress passed the 2018 Farm Bill by a wide margin on December 20th and President Trump signed it into law on December 21st, but this legislation still needs to be implemented. The implementation was slowed and complicated further by a federal shutdown that lasted for 35 days.

Steve Censky, USDA Deputy Undersecretary, said that USDA will do what it needs to do to put the farm bill into practice. He will establish listening sessions on how best to proceed. The Farm Bill is important to our industry because it allows the Christmas tree industry to apply for funding through our designated Specialty Crop Status.

Farm Labor

From California to our East Coast rural farmers need labor. At present, any sort of meaningful legislation seems to be “off the table”. Many of the departments that are needed to coordinate this important legislation are understaffed or have acting Deputy Heads.

Labor providers continue to try to make the H-2A Program more user friendly and also continue to argue that the H-2B cap needs to be raised.

Overtime Pay for Farm Workers

The “Fairness for Farm Workers Act” legislation has been introduced by Senator Kamala Harris of California and Representative Raul Grijalva of Arizona. The legislation proposes overtime pay for farm workers but at present has only 5 or 6 co-sponsors. Farm workers are exempt from overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act. This legislation may have a difficult time getting additional sponsors.

Note: Washington State continues to raise the issue of overtime for farm workers and at present the issue is before the Washington State Supreme Court. No news on when this will be heard. 🌲

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2019**

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Banner Elk, NC
Avery County**

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July 25, 2019.
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Topics include:

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Banner Elk Mountain Lodge
1615 Tynecastle Hwy
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Friday Evening:

Social celebrating NCCTA's 60th Anniversary

Saturday:

Avery County Farm Tour

Highlights include:

Scouting and Inventorying with Drones,
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and Aerial Application with Helicopter Services
Afternoon Pig Pickin' for lunch at Avery Farms

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Friday Night \$129.00 + tax

For reservations call: (828) 898-4571



Too Many Frights:

What's on the Horizon for Regulatory Pests in Christmas Trees

Jill R. Sidebottom

Area Christmas Tree Extension
Specialist, NC State University

The October 22, 2018 edition of *The Star-Ledger*, a New Jersey newspaper based in Newark, had the following headline — *'Tis the fright before Christmas: Invasive bug lurking in the tree*. That was one of many articles surrounding concerns that the spotted lanternfly (SLF) might emerge from real Christmas trees. Media coverage included a special statement from Senator Charles Schumer from New York, cautioning that egg masses could be found on cut Christmas trees which could have a devastating impact on agriculture. These articles were countered by several state departments of agriculture, explaining that this was a rare occurrence and that Christmas tree growers were on the watch — there's no need to be afraid to buy a real tree.

Also in 2018 was a series of articles discussing issues that North Carolina growers are all too aware of — shipping elongate hemlock scale (EHS) to other states. Most of these stories centered on the western US where EHS has the potential to damage native hemlocks, firs, spruces and Douglas-fir. Consumers were urged to cut up their Christmas trees and put them in trash bags instead of recycling them. This didn't help with the positive environmental image of real trees.



The Spotted Lanternfly is a colorful insect! Top photos are the immature stage which is black with white spots and, in its last immature stage, also has red coloration. When at rest, the top wings are held tent-like and are gray with black spots. The underwings are a bright red and may be seen in flight. Images: Lawrence Barringer, PA Dept. of Agriculture, Bugwood.org.

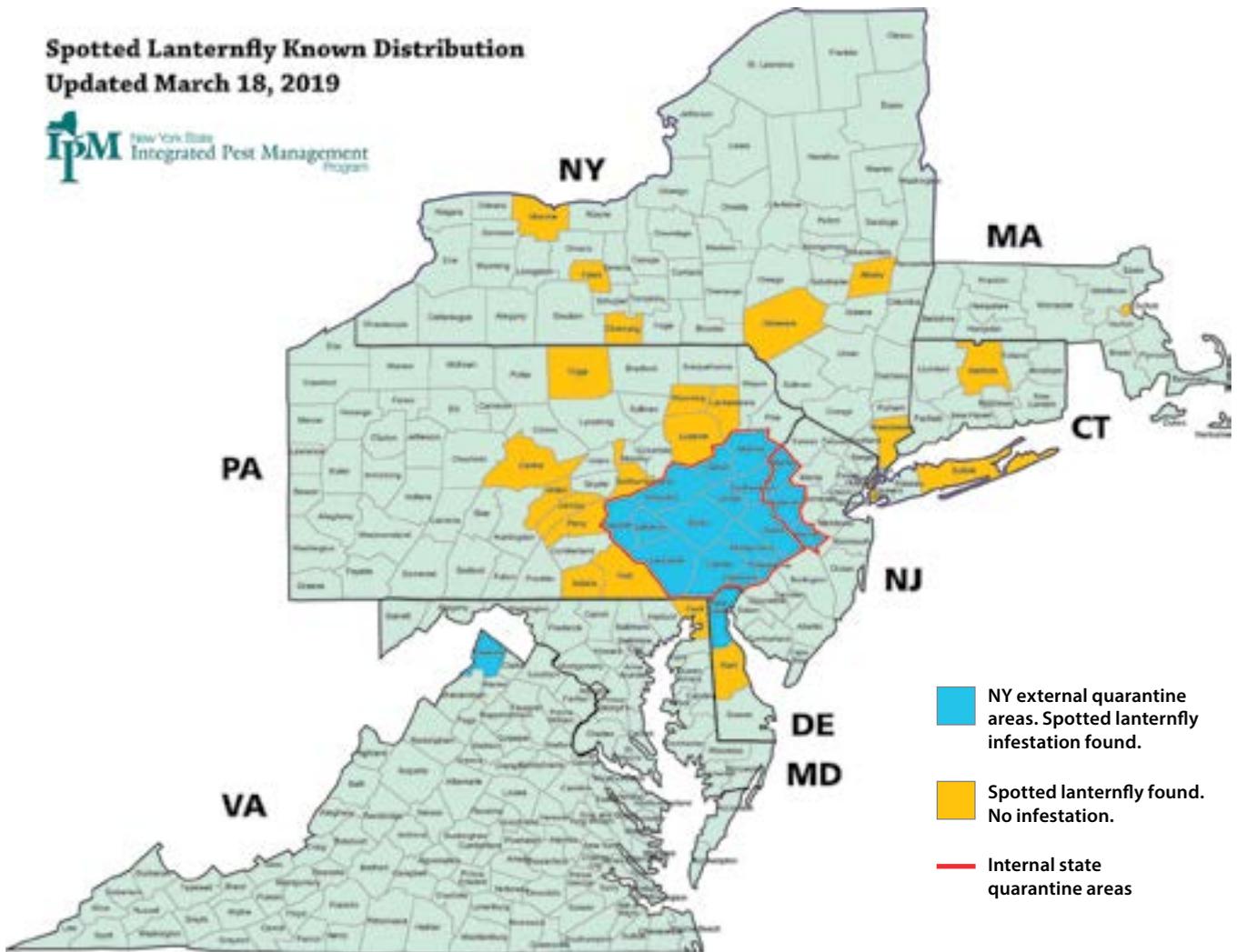
The media and regulatory attention from potential pests being shipped in Christmas trees has become a true fright for the entire industry — for North Carolina growers and the rest of the country.

It wasn't always this way. Real trees have been sold for more than 100 years in the US with little oversight as to who might be “hitching a ride.” The current increase in scrutiny isn't because pests and arthropods in



The egg mass is 1-1.5" long. When newly laid, they are shiny and once hardened, look like dried mud. This stage can be accidentally transported if eggs are laid on smooth materials (bricks, stone) which are then moved. Images: Pennsylvania Dept. of Agriculture, Bugwood.org (left); K. Law, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org.

Spotted Lanternfly Known Distribution
Updated March 18, 2019



general weren't on cut Christmas trees in years past. In fact, except for the SLF, any of the pests that have been stopped going into other states have been in the Christmas tree industry since the 1990s and earlier. But there is an increased emphasis in invasive pests because of the damage they have caused recently. Also, because of climate change, we're no longer sure how pests will behave. Insects that weren't pests are becoming pests due to changes in trending weather patterns. Truly regulatory issues will be the main pest control problem for the 21st century Christmas tree industry.

The first pest that became a problem to Christmas tree growers was the gypsy moth. Starting with

the Domestic Plant Quarantine act of 1912, the USDA has regulated the movement of plant material from areas determined to be infested by gypsy moth. Much of Pennsylvania was infested in the 1970s. By 1981, so were several counties in Michigan. Christmas tree growers in other states have had to deal with gypsy moth for a long time. Thanks to the Slow the Spread program (a regional IPM management and educational program), gypsy moth still isn't established in the NC Mountains. However, Wythe County, Virginia became part of the gypsy moth quarantine most recently, so it's just a matter of time.

In 1992, another quarantined pest was first observed in a Christmas

tree farm near Cleveland, Ohio. The pine shoot beetle (*Tomicus piniperda*) is now found from Maine west to Minnesota and Iowa, as far north as Ontario and Quebec and as far south as Maryland, West Virginia, and southern Illinois. Christmas tree growers can follow a pine shoot beetle compliance management program to ship their trees to other areas. Pine shoot beetle hasn't developed into as devastating a pest as once feared, but regulators still inspect for it. In fact gypsy moth and pine shoot beetle are the only pests with a national quarantine that involve cut Christmas trees. As of this printing date, that is still true of SLF — there is no national quarantine — only state quarantines. EHS is

considered an established pest in the US since it's been here more than 100 years — there are no national or state quarantines; EHS falls under general regulations about shipping pests.

The EHS has been an issue with the Christmas tree industry on the east coast since the 1980s from problems developing in NC in the 2000s. We learned early on in NC that if trees weren't treated with an insecticide in the fall, the male scale would become active in the home and produce white waxy filaments noticeable to customers. These concerns with customer satisfaction initially were the only concerns with EHS except when trees were being shipped out of the country where there was more regulatory scrutiny.

The increased regulatory scrutiny from other countries is no doubt due in part to an issue with another scale pest. Pine tortoise scale is believed to have been introduced to the Turks and Caicos Islands sometime before 2005 from Scotch pine Christmas trees from North America. This pest has had a devastating effect on the Caribbean pine. Because there were no natural enemies and no cold weather to check their growth, their numbers exploded causing devastating losses to these pines.

Issues with EHS in the US developed in 2012 when the Florida Department of Agriculture began noticing EHS on cut trees. Their concerns were that EHS crawlers would move onto conifers found in Florida and again cause a problem because of the warmer climate. As most of you know, NC State and the University of Florida have been involved in a host study with conifers found in Florida to address this concern. This study is being supported by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board. However,

this host study addresses issues with trees shipped to states that do have the EHS hosts such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Utah, Oregon and California. Robert Jetton with CAMCORE and NCSU, Jeff Owen and I are seeking grant funding for a student to determine just how long crawlers leave cut Christmas trees under different circumstances.

Growers know which fields have more scale problems, and not every tree or wreath has scales. We are seeking funding to produce short videos in English and Spanish for workers to train them to spot scale pests in the field and on trees and wreaths. We hope to have these available by fall on YouTube so you can easily train new workers or refresh the memories of older ones.

The latest pest to cause concern is, of course, the spotted lantern fly. This pest, native to China, Vietnam and Bangladesh, is never a problem in its home. And SLF isn't likely to feed much on conifers. It's been observed feeding on white pine, but then the resins exuded from the tree cause it to move somewhere else. Unfortunately, lack of feeding doesn't mean it won't lay egg masses on Christmas tree trunks. Eggs are laid on about anything wider than 2 inches if SLF is in the area.

There was at least one incidence where SLF hatched out in someone's house from a cut Christmas tree. This tree was grown in Pennsylvania where the pest was first found. Like so many other post-harvest pests, they are only a nuisance and won't cause any damage to the home, bite someone, or spread disease. The eggs typically require some chilling before they will hatch, but a low percentage of eggs don't require that and would hatch out in the home. In fact, it is almost

worse if they don't hatch out because then, when the tree is discarded, the eggs could hatch in the spring and start developing in a new area.



The SLF is usually first observed feeding on tree of heaven (TOH) which is its preferred host. It might even require TOH to complete its lifecycle. But nymphs feed on a wider range of plants. Plants to look on for SLF include roses and especially multiflora rose, vines (poison ivy, honeysuckle, hops, grape vines, oriental bittersweet), black walnut and sumac, red and silver maple, willow, river birch, and poplar. When small, they can be mistaken for ants or ticks, but if you touch one, it hops away since it is a plant hopper. To train yourself and your workers what to look for, go to: extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-permit-training.

Since regulatory issues are here to stay, every Christmas tree grower can follow these guidelines:

- **Stay informed about where emerging pest issues are found**
- **Be careful when bringing in seedlings, supplies or equipment from SLF quarantine areas, or when traveling there**
- **Educate all workers what these pests look like**
- **Offer rewards for workers who spot problem pests before shipping**
- **Make sure you have all necessary documentation to ship trees and wreaths**

If you have any questions on pest control, contact me or your county extension agent. For more information on regulatory issues, contact the NCDA&CS Plant Industry Division. If you find SLF, please let us know! 🌲

Christmas Tree Research Endowment Fund

We depend on you to sustain a future for the
Christmas Tree Industry

\$220,000 pledged to date!

Thank You

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If you would like to join this effort by making a contribution to the association's fund and/or fund a named endowment, email cnr_development@ncsu.edu or call **919.513.7734**

NC State Natural Resources Foundation

Branching Out

A pioneer in forestry, NC State's College of Natural Resources has advanced North Carolina's Christmas tree industry through the application of genetic principles for more than 20 years. Our focus on improving tree species important to our state and screening new species for production will ensure that North Carolina remains one of the top producers of Christmas trees in the nation, with more than \$100 million in revenue annually, for years to come.

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Elongate Hemlock Scale

Regulatory Shipping Update

Whitney Swink
State Entomologist

Joy Goforth
Plant Pest Administrator

NCDA&CS, Plant Industry Division

Although elongate hemlock scale is present in roughly fourteen states along the eastern seaboard, most states in the country do not have this pest and do not want to risk it spreading into their states through movement of infested trees and greenery. As a result, elongate hemlock scale is of regulatory concern for the North Carolina Christmas tree industry meaning shipping can be and has been affected. The 2018 Christmas tree season was remarkably problematic with six states taking regulatory action against scale-infested Fraser fir material from North Carolina including California, Florida, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. All of these states destroyed infested material which included cut Christmas trees, wreaths, branches, boughs, swag, and miscellaneous holiday products (e.g. baskets, pots, bouquets). In some cases, live crawlers were found on the shipped material.

The elongate hemlock scale (*Fiorinia externa*; EHS) is an armored scale insect that is a non-native pest of conifers including hemlocks and Fraser fir that was first detected in New York in 1908 and has been present in North Carolina since at least the early 1990's. EHS is known to occur throughout hemlock forests in the eastern United States and is now a common pest found on Christmas tree farms.

Fraser firs infested with EHS can develop yellowing on the needles and have stunted growth; however, these symptoms may not be conspicuous unless the infestation is heavy. More commonly you will see the white, waxy excretions produced by the males during the summer months. Control of this pest is difficult as the scales are primarily found on the underside of the needles making pesticide applications difficult and control costs can rise quickly. In addition, pesticide use can kill off natural scale predators

which can lead to a rise in the elongate hemlock scale population. Please consult Jill Sidebottom (Christmas Tree Extension Specialist) or your local county extension agent for the most up-to-date control recommendations.



Infestation of elongate hemlock scale on Fraser fir: (1) Close-up of scales on underside of Fraser fir needles, (2) Fraser fir infested with EHS showing white waxy excretion from male scales; photos by Lorraine Graney, Bartlett Tree Experts, Bugwood.org

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Plant Industry Division staff is in the process of determining what we can do to support producers and help prevent the 2018 issues from reoccurring in the 2019 shipping season. Our current recommendation for North Carolina Christmas tree growers is to stress quality control prior to shipping and be aware of other states' regulations with regards to shipping Christmas trees. Where possible, select trees from non-infested fields or non-infested portions of fields. Prioritize sending clean material to states where EHS is not known to occur. Your local Plant Pest Specialist can inspect a field prior to harvest and/or inspect your material for presence of scale at the loading yard after harvest.

It is extremely important to not ship trees that are visibly infested with elongate hemlock scale, because other states are within their right to destroy the material. This regulatory action holds true for all insects, diseases, and weeds. Shipping material infested with any pest of concern is prohibited. Prior to shipping, we encourage our North Carolina Christmas tree growers to contact the Department of Agriculture for the receiving states to determine their specific shipping requirements for Christmas trees and cut greenery from North Carolina.

Researchers with North Carolina State University and elsewhere are investigating more effective integrated pest management techniques for this insect and developing a clearer understanding of the risk of elongate hemlock scale introduction into new areas. 🌲

If you have questions please call your local NCDA&CS Plant Pest Specialist or call:

Joy Goforth
 NCDA&CS Plant Pest Administrator
 (919-707-3753
 joy.goforth@ncagr.gov



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Amanda Cook
 (828) 443-1289

Region 16:

Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Caldwell, Watauga
Chad Taylor
 (336) 466-0478

Region 17:

Avery, Haywood, Madison, Mitchell, Yancey
Tim Hartley
 (828) 260-0588

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2018 NCCTA GROWER SURVEY REFLECTS OPTIMISM AND GROWTH

Jeff Owen

Area Christmas Tree Extension Specialist, NC State University

The 2019 survey of NCCTA members reflects several important trends that determine current and future market trends in our industry. While we don't need a survey to tell us that we are currently in a seller's market with strong prices, this survey captured grower perceptions that ultimately determine the supply of trees and the strength of future markets. This article will focus primarily on acreage, planting trends, and pricing.

Respondents

At the time of this analysis, 41 growers had completed the survey. Thirty-three respondents (82.5%) sold wholesale trees, almost one third (32.5%) operated retail lots, and forty-two percent operated Choose & Cut operations (Figure 1). Only two respondents to this question added mail order to their diversified marketing strategies in 2018. Asked to "check all that apply," twenty-five respondents (62.5%) utilized two or more business strategies with several employing all four.

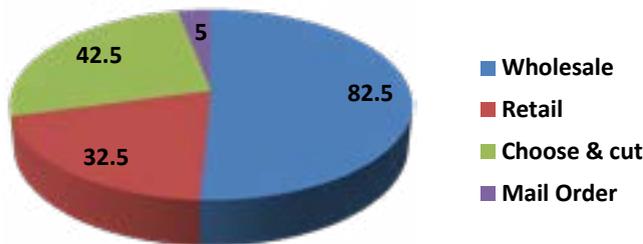


Figure 1. Respondent representation by market segment

Acreage in Production

Acreage categories identified by respondents were used to estimate Christmas tree acreage represented by the 2018 survey. Figure 2 shows the potential range in acreage represented by the low, center, and high boundaries of acreage categories. The acreage class margins

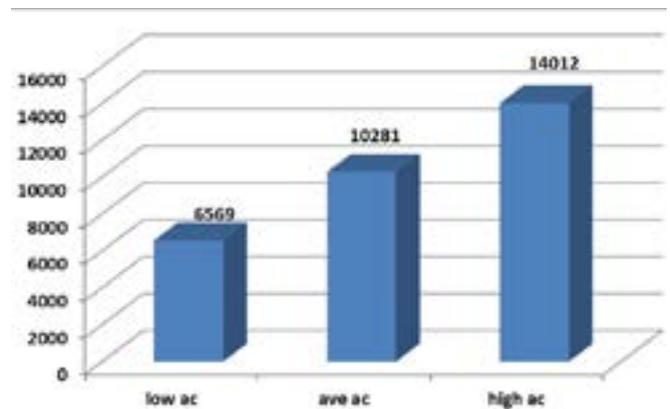


Figure 2. 2018 Acreage estimates based on lower, midpoint, and upper category limits

represented a potential range of 7,443 acres between high and low estimates of production. Based upon the midpoint of acreage classes, survey respondents grew 10,281 acres of trees. This number was down from 2014 and 2016 acreage estimates but greater than what was estimated for 2012 survey respondents (Figure 3).

Reported Acreage: 2012, 2014, 2016, & 2019

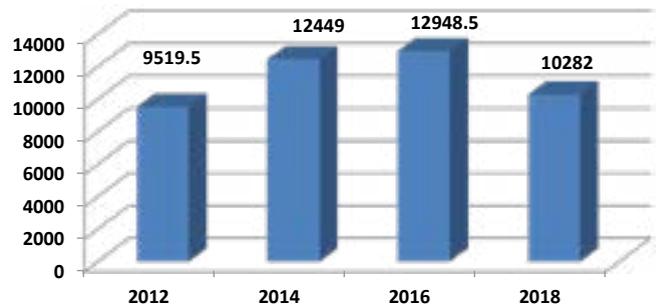


Figure 3. Estimated acreage based on category midpoints for 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018

The distribution of 2018 respondents by acreage class was skewed toward smaller farms. Nineteen respondents farmed less than fifty acres and eleven farmed less than one hundred acres. Average farm size across all survey respondents was 251 acres based on the mid-point of acre-

age categories. However, the eleven larger-scale growers who responded to the survey accounted for a majority of acreage reported (figure 4). The thirty respondents who farmed 100 acres or less represented only 12.5% of estimated acreage. Just three major growers in the 1,000 acre plus category represented 44% of estimated acreage. This distribution of a majority of Christmas Tree acreage among relatively few large scale growers compared to the majority of growers producing much less is representative of our industry as a whole.

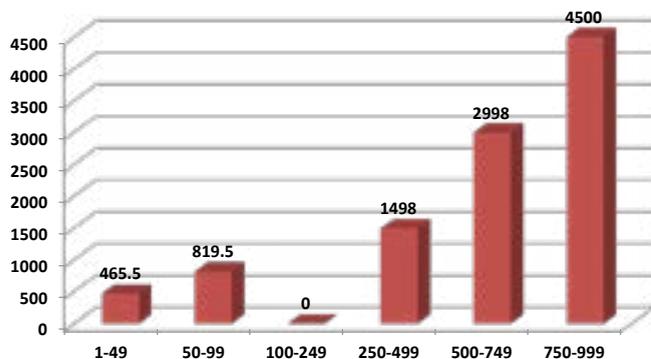


Figure 4. Estimated 2018 farm acreage by midpoint of acreage categories

Determination of the number of trees in the ground is only a small step away from acreage estimates. If an assumption is made that all trees are set on five by five foot spacing (1,750 trees per acre) and that all Christmas tree farms are fully stocked, 10,281 acres corresponds to almost 18 million trees in the ground. With some major growers setting over 2,200 trees per acre, the 5 by 5 assumption is arguably conservative and would balance adjustments for roads, culls, and understocking.

Further assuming even distribution by age class over a ten year rotation, one could predict 1.8 million trees being planted by the 41 survey respondents. If an eight year rotation were used, the annual planting rate would increase the total number planted to 2.25 million trees. Including a 15% cull rate and the number of marketable trees would be in the 1.5 to 1.7 million range in six to eight years.

Certainly there are an almost infinite number of ways to manipulate acreage data from this survey and resulting tree estimates. However, these estimates still represent only 41 growers. Without the level of sampling represented by the Ag Census or the Green Industry surveys, it is impossible to accurately translate results industry-wide.

How many trees did you harvest in 2018?

When asked how many trees they harvested in 2018, numbers reported by respondents fell short of acreage-based numbers. Respondents reported cutting less than 750,000 trees collectively based on category mid-points (figure 5) which was less than half of what the acreage-based calculations generated. If the high end of each harvest category were used, numbers could be as high as 1.3 million trees.

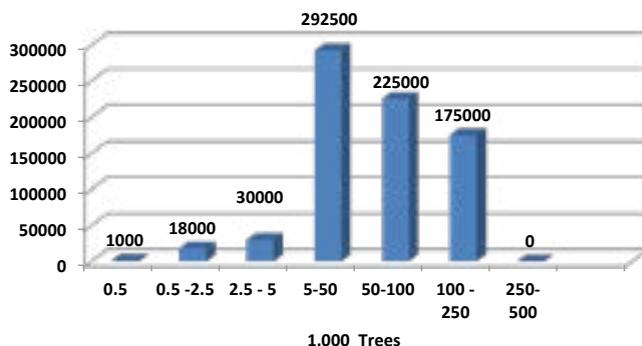


Figure 5. Tree harvest estimates based on selected harvest categories (X 1,000)

We can't know if the difference between the two harvest estimates reflects growers' penchant for secrecy, inclusion of non-Christmas tree land in acreage selections, a high level of under-stocking across acreage included in the survey population, or overly optimistic assumptions used in the acreage-based tree estimates. Even when filling out an anonymous survey, some growers will "hold their cards close to their chest." (figure 6)

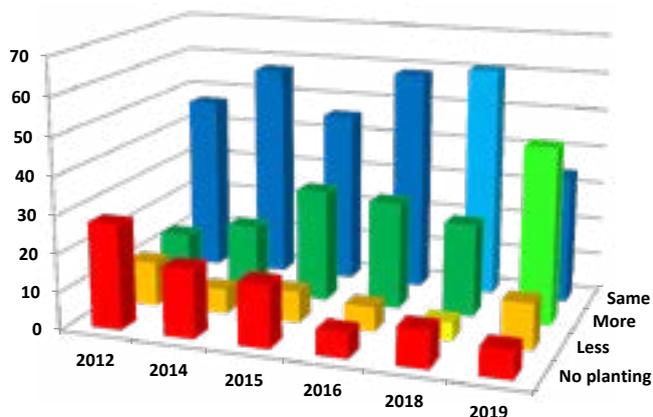


Figure 6. Fraser Fir Planting Trends: 2012 through 2018 with 2019 expectations

Planting Trends

Respondents were asked about their pattern of tree planting – trees planted in 2018 and those expected to be planted in 2019. Growers could select “increase,” “decrease,” “same,” or “none planted.” In figure 6, the 2018 and 2019 responses were added to results collected from previous NCCTA surveys. In 2018, fewer respondents increased their level of planting compared to previous years. A few more respondents did not plant or planted the same number of trees compared to previous years. However, in 2019, nearly twice as many growers expected to increase their level of planting (from 24% in 2018 to 46% in 2019). The number of growers who expected to plant less in 2019 tripled but was still only about 12%. Without more information, it is impossible to tell if the projected increase in planting is a result of greater optimism and a response to higher tree prices or simply lessening of the planting stock shortage.

Tree Pricing

Growers were asked about their pricing decisions in 2018 (Figure 7) and their pricing intent for 2019 (Figure 8) by market category. The vast majority of respondents increased prices across all market segments in 2018 and

plan to increase them again in 2019. In 2018, two thirds of wholesalers increased prices by 10%, and another 18% of respondents increased prices between 11 and 20%. At no time did respondents report increasing prices more than 20%. There were no reported decreases in 2018 prices. Only two retailers plan to decrease prices in 2019. The largest change among respondents between 2018 and 2019 was the decrease in the number of wholesalers who raised prices 5-10%. There was a corresponding increase in the number of wholesalers who planned to raise their prices 1-5%.

The fact that pricing trends are still going up is a clear measure of both the perceived scarcity of current tree supplies and continued optimism among growers. These increases are being added to previous increases over the past five or six years. Most growers have finally regained and even surpassed price levels they received prior to the oversupply and 2008 recession. However, even the highest prices may not have kept pace with inflation if one considers the \$20 tree prices that growers were getting as far back as the late 1980’s. The slight reduction in price increases between 2018 and 2019 may reflect a sense of caution among growers and a concern about what is good for long term markets.

Tree planting trends are quite likely linked to the same levels of optimism and emotion as current pricing. Optimistic growers are increasing prices and increasing the number of trees they plant. Some of those growers that held planting to the same level as last year are still planting more than they did five years ago. When markets are up, every tree grower is motivated to grab whatever market share they can. They might be planting for themselves, their children, or possibly their grandchildren. They might have a well-written business plan that takes future trends into consideration. Their wholesale customer’s markets might appear to be secure and expanding. Their guarded optimism might even make sense given the current situation

However, with a crop that can take eight to ten years to grow, trees planted today may be harvested in a very different economic climate. Who knows what the economy will be like in ten years or what the demand for trees will be? Already there is enough concern among growers that when two or more are gathered together, the topic of conversation quickly turns to the future and the potential for another oversupply. Their concerns may be appropriate.

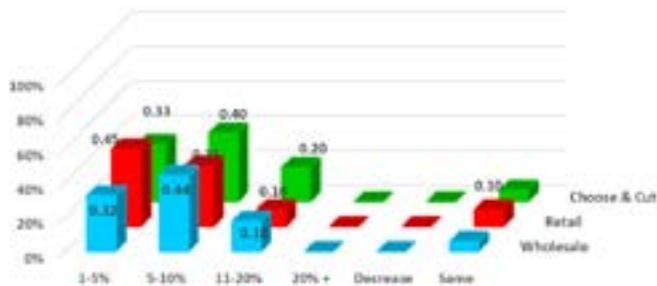


Figure 7. Percent of growers who increased prices in 2018 by market segment

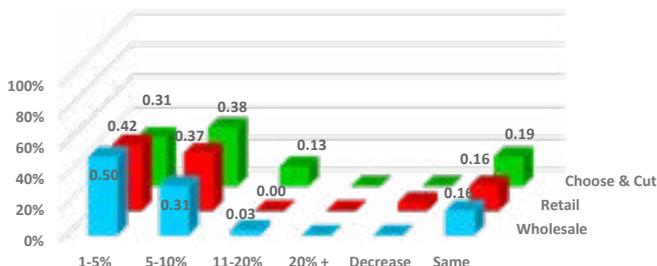


Figure 8. Percent of growers who intend to increase prices in 2019 by market segment

Looking to the Future

As we consider the future, I believe there are factors that can shift our Christmas tree markets for the good and delay risk of an oversupply:

Continued promotion by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board is the only concerted industry-wide national effort to expand markets and demand for Christmas trees.

Diversification of greenery and table top Christmas tree products expands Christmas tree markets and creates greater demand for seedlings and lower quality trees. How much inventory will be siphoned off to these other markets and products?

Recent seedling shortages have provided some moderating effect to growers' optimistic plans for expansion. However, seedling shortages have negatively impacted small producers to a greater extent than larger-scale growers. This aspect has probably minimized any benefit or slow-down provided by limited seedling supplies.

While no one wishes for region-wide problems like Phytophthora root rot or a spring freeze, factors do arise that decrease or delay harvests. Production problems can be an economic "blessing in disguise" if they put off the onset of an oversupply.

Of course there are factors that will potentially aggravate an expanding market and supply of trees:

Concerns associated with regulatory pests such as elongate hemlock scale or the as yet unseen spotted lantern fly weigh on many growers' minds. Quarantines have the potential to close or shift markets. One grower's loss (or a region's loss) to a quarantine could be another's

gain. Regulatory issues inject a level of uncertainty that is destabilizing to the market.

While less dramatic, potential loss of national leadership (the Christmas Tree Promotion Board) at a critical time in our industry could be just as devastating as an invasive pest. Another restructuring of the National Christmas Tree Association would halt any progress on critical industry issues.

Major growers hold enough market share to individually influence regional as well as national markets. Decisions to expand planting, target new regions or even to quit have implications far beyond their own business. Consequences can have a domino effect that impact wholesale markets across the region and nation.

While the 2019 NCCTA grower survey represented a small sample population, it is still a valuable window into growers' perceptions and activities. Growers make individual decisions, but they impact the market together. The Christmas tree market is a shared, limited resource that can be developed or squandered. Either path can be taken individually as growers or collectively as an industry. The 2004 NCCTA planting survey gave growers a warning four short years ahead of the impending oversupply for those

who took heed. It was not enough time to significantly alter production, but it did give growers time to increase their individual marketing. In a similar fashion, current grower optimism identified in this survey represents both future risk and future opportunity. These survey results point to the need to seek wisdom, plan strategically, and act with coordination. 🌲

“ Growers make individual decisions, but they impact the market together. The Christmas tree market is a shared, limited resource that can be developed or squandered. Either path can be taken individually as growers or collectively as an industry. ”



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Timely reporting of workers' compensation claims is extremely important. Although late reporting does not jeopardize an injured worker's benefits, it can greatly complicate the claim and usually results in increased costs to the employer. Here are a few ways timely reporting can save (or cost) money.



Securing Immediate Medical Treatment: Saves Money

The Commission has adopted a Medical Fee Schedule (MFS) that contains maximum reimbursement rates for medical and hospital services. Carriers pay providers based on the MFS. Carriers work with medical bill review companies that contract with providers for further savings. Susan Egan, one of the managing partners of Employer's Choice Network who reviews bills for First Benefits Insurance Mutual, advised that a visit to urgent care typically costs an employer \$205 but applying the MFS would reduce the cost to \$145 while the contracted rate would decrease it even further to \$116. Therefore, the savings reduction from direct pay to PPO for an urgent care office visit is 44%. The savings for a carrier as com-

pared to an employer for a CT scan during an ER visit is 88%. By submitting a claim timely, medical expenses can be reduced between 40% and 90%.

Claims professionals know health care providers: the doctors that recommend surgery immediately as compared to those that initially suggest conservative care; the doctors who refuse to assign light duty work restrictions; and the doctors who inflate the value of permanency ratings. Plus, carriers know the injuries that require immediate treatment. For example, if a shoulder tendon is torn and treatment is delayed, the tendon may retract so it cannot be repaired. Allowing a carrier to select providers and direct medical care can lower medical expenses and may reduce the disability period and the amount of a permanency rating, thus decreasing overall claim costs.

Investigating a Case Within 48-Hours: Saves Money

While a typical claim will resolve shortly, litigation can be required even in a compensable claim. It is impossible to predict when a simple claim will turn into a monster. The first 48-hours after an accident are the most critical so ensure a thorough investigation is completed and evidence is not lost by turning in claims timely. It is best to secure a recorded statement from an injured worker while the event is fresh and before the employee has been coached. Interviewing witnesses independently may avoid cross contamination. Collecting documentary evidence before it is destroyed is crucial. Did you know that some hospitals only keep urine/blood samples for 24 hours? Or that most surveillance video is erased on a loop within one week? Claims professionals are well versed in laws/rules that apply to claims including potential defenses. Carriers have access to experts who offer free advice on claim investigation and how to best posture for settlement. When litigation cannot be avoided, evidence

secured during a thorough and timely investigation may prevent prolonged litigation, win the day, and mitigate claim costs.

Violating State or Federal Law: Costs Money

Employers must advise the Commission when an employee has been absent from work for more than one day or where more than \$2,000 has been paid in medicals due to a work injury. Failure to file will result in penalties to the employer. Federal law states that a workers' compensation carrier is responsible for medical bills related to a work injury, not Medicare. Medicare requires entities to report information such as ICD codes once claim related medical treatment exceeds \$750. Since one visit to the ER can cost more than \$750, it is best to immediately report claims so a carrier can track medical expenses and manage state and federal reporting to avoid penalties.

Creating a Positive Work Environment: Saves Money

There are hidden costs related to work injuries. Workers who receive immediate care after an injury feel



valued and are motivated to return to work. Preventing an employee from immediately seeking treatment may decrease morale of other employees, place the injured worker and others at risk for additional injuries and decrease efficiency. High turnover can lead to increased hiring and retraining costs.

Simply put, immediate reporting of workers' compensation claims can save time, frustration and money. 🌲



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Worker Protection Standard Requires Increased Respiratory Protection

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is aimed at reducing the risk of pesticide poisoning and injury among agricultural workers and pesticide handlers. The WPS offers occupational protections to over 2 million agricultural workers (people involved in the production of agricultural plants) and pesticide handlers (people who mix, load, or apply crop pesticides) who work at agricultural establishments (farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses). Pesticides are used in agricultural production across North Carolina to kill organisms and pests that damage or destroy crops.

On November 2, 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency revised the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) to implement more protections for agricultural workers, handlers and their families. The WPS revisions are intended to decrease pesticide exposure incidents among agricultural workers, pesticide handlers and their families. All of the WPS revisions are now in effect. WPS training materials are available at the Pesticide Education Resources Collaborative (<https://pesticideresources.org>).

In addition to requiring an updated safety poster, suspending an application if someone is in the application zone and other protections, the WPS requires that anyone handling a pesticide labelled for respiratory protec-

tion complete a medical clearance, fit test and training prior to using handling the pesticide. Fit test and training must be repeated on an annual basis with medical clearance being repeated under certain conditions.

Assistance with respiratory protection requirements is available to farms, nurseries and other agricultural establishments through the North Carolina Agromedicine Institute ('the Institute') thanks to support from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services – Pesticide Environmental Trust Fund. Contact the Institute for more information at 252.744.1008. 🌲

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REFERENCES

US EPA–WPS: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/agricultural-worker-protection-standard-wps>

Pesticide Resources Collaborative: <https://pesticideresources.org>

NC Agromedicine Institute – Respiratory Protection: <http://www.ncagromedicine.org/program-respiratory.php>

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Commissioner Causey



Commissioner Causey approves decrease to workers' compensation rates

Lower rates mean lower operating costs for businesses

RALEIGH – N.C. business owners may soon enjoy lower operating costs. On Oct. 19, Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey approved an average 17.2 percent rate decrease for workers' compensation insurance to be effective April 1, 2019.

"This rate decrease should serve as an economic boon to the state's

small businesses," said Commissioner Causey. "I am pleased to approve the North Carolina Rate Bureau's request for lower rates because it will ultimately put more money in the pockets of business owners and our consumers."

The NCRB files requests on behalf of the state's insurance industry to the N.C. Department of Insurance.

On August 29, 2018, the NCRB proposed an average 15.8 percent rate decrease to manufacturing industry groups, an average 6.5 percent decrease to contracting industry

groups, and an average 19.3 percent decrease to both office and clerical and goods and services industries. The filing proposed an average 14.7 percent decrease to other, miscellaneous industry groups.

According to the NCRB, the filed decrease is the result of insurance carriers having and paying out fewer workers' compensation claims.

The N.C. Workers' Compensation Act is administered by the North Carolina Industrial Commission, which is housed under the North Carolina Department of Insurance. 🌲

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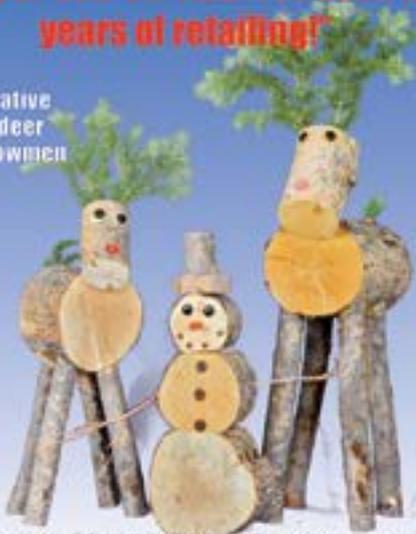


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REPORT TO THE INDUSTRY

As Christmas tree growers and importers face a second referendum vote in as many years, the industry is considering the efforts of the CTPB and how they impact the future of the Christmas tree industry. Those efforts fall into three major categories: research, promotion and education.

Research:

A \$600,000 Investment and Counting

The science behind growing and caring for Christmas trees can have long-ranging impacts on the industry. That's why the Christmas Tree Promotion Board has invested or committed more than \$600,000 in a slate of research projects designed to benefit the entire industry.

"We're all interconnected," explained Della Deal, CTPB Research Committee Chair. "A research project

in Pennsylvania can impact growers in the Pacific Northwest. We try to choose projects all over the country."

The projects that are currently receiving CTPB funding range from having the potential to make a grower's life a little easier to completely transforming a grower's operation.

CTPB Funded Research Projects

The Cooperative Fir Germplasm Evaluation (CoFirGe): an experiment to see how well Turkish and Trojan firs can grow in various locations across the country: CAES, OSU, WSU, PSU, MSU and NCSU.

Understanding the Impact of Elongate Hemlock Scale, Jill Sidebottom, NCSU

Development of IPM Strategies for Management of Slugs on Christmas Trees, OSU, WSU

Cultural options for controlling cones in Fraser fir plantations, Bert Cregg, MSU

Fraser Fir Cone Control Research, Ashe County Center, NCSU

Developing Strategies for Leader Control in Nordmann and Turkish fir, Chal Landgren, OSU

Spray Drones to Apply Agricultural Materials to Christmas Trees, Travis Birdsell, NCSU

Post-Entry Elimination of Megastigmus Seed Larvae in Imported Conifer Seed, Gary Chastagner, WSU

Enhanced establishment and growth of bare-root transplants using controlled-release fertilizers, Richard Cowles, CAES

Management options for herbicide resistant weeds in Christmas tree production, Joseph Neal, NCSU

Effectiveness of preharvest application of 1-MCP in reducing needle loss on cut Christmas trees, Gary Chastagner, WSU

Managing cone formation in Abies Christmas tree species, Bert Cregg, MSU

Evaluation of Nordmann Fir (*Abies nordmanniana*) Seed Sources for U.S. Christmas Tree Production, Chal Landgren, OSU

Twig Weevil- A small poorly understood pest inflicting havoc in the PNW export markets, Gary Chastagner, WSU

Spotted Lanternfly: A new exotic pest threatening the mid-Atlantic Christmas tree market, Rick Bates, PSU

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), Oregon State University (OSU), Washington State University (WSU), Pennsylvania State University (PSU), Michigan State University (MSU), North Carolina State University (NCSU)

ELONGATE HEMLOCK SCALE



Plants in the greenhouse when they were first infested with EHS. The infested shoots of Fraser fir are attached to each plant.

Dr. Adam Dale and Paige Patterson, Watauga County extension agent, examine the plants for scale and study them under the microscope to determine if they are alive.



“Research is the only way you move forward,” Deal said. “There’s always going to be an insect disease issue that is an immediate need to deal with...”

CONING



Cone removal - Cone removal presents significant labor, time, and potential worker safety issues.

Heavy coning, 100% control and cone kill (comparison photos) – Representation of the significant coverage of cones on untreated trees, as compared to treated trees



And then there’s genetic improvement, and that’s a huge part of becoming profitable and sustainable.”

CoFirGE



Detached branch needle retention evaluations that were done on all of the trees in the Nisqually CoFirGE plot earlier this fall.

Sorting and Tagging – Trial seedlings are sorted and tagged.





Promotion: Targeting Millennials with Social Media Campaign

Working again with advertising agency, Concept Farm and public relations firm, Fleishman Hillard, the CTPB further honed its consumer messaging and defined a narrower target market of “millennial mom.” The 2018 holiday campaign built on past successes and found new opportunities for sharing its message.

Stick with What Works

The It’s Christmas. Keep it Real campaign continued the success that it had in 2017 by featuring entertaining videos through its Facebook and Instagram pages. This season, the campaign produced a series of videos featuring real Christmas tree customers. They shared their funny and heartwarming family traditions as well as their

real Christmas tree selection trips with viewers across the country.

The first family video debuted just in time for Thanksgiving and a total of six families were featured throughout the season; a new family being featured each week until Christmas. Reach of the videos was expanded by “boosting” through paid reach and partner sharing.

Also back was the satellite media tour, which secured more than 30 television and radio interviews coast to coast. Millennial Christmas tree producer, Derek Ahl was joined by lifestyle expert Jocelyn Delk Adams and the pair shared the benefits of celebrating with a fresh Christmas tree in dozens of media markets across the country on morning news and talk shows via satellite up-link from a studio in Chicago.



And Try Something New

Of course, it's important to always look for new opportunities. This past season, the campaign reached young families nationwide through its Red Tricycle media partnership.

Red Tricycle is an online media site that reaches millions of families each month, and they featured our real Christmas tree message front and center in their email newsletters, feature articles and through advertising on RedTri.com.

A sponsored newsletter featuring real Christmas tree messages was sent to all Red Tricycle email subscribers, followed by a series of sponsored articles highlighting real Christmas tree experiences of Red Tricycle editors. Our own tree grower moms were featured in a Red Tricycle story on December 7 and the campaign sponsored "homepage takeover" of RedTri.com, with our advertising prominently displayed all weekend long, December 14-16.

Another new twist for the campaign was a Facebook LIVE event. The It's Christmas. Keep it Real campaign went live on November 24 & 25. Holidazzle, a Christmas marketplace and entertainment venue in Minneapolis, MN, was the backdrop for the first broadcast, where we engaged with the public on all things real trees. The second location was a retail Christmas tree lot. Our Facebook followers watched as customers enjoyed holiday fun and selected that perfect Christmas tree.



It All Adds Up

Beyond these key campaign components, the team sponsored The Real Trees, Real Memories sweepstakes, encouraging consumers to share their real Christmas tree photos on our social pages, and offering \$250 gift cards to 10 winners. The sweepstakes received over 900 entries and was promoted through Red Tricycle, our own social media and through 15 Facebook and Instagram influencers. And those influencers did more than announce the contest, they shared their own personal real Christmas tree stories with their loyal followers.

The CTPB was an official sponsor of the Christmas Spirit Foundation's Trees for Troops program for a third year. The well-established program already has developed goodwill with consumers and the media and is an important outreach for the Christmas tree industry. In a separate sponsorship, CTPB purchased more than 70 fresh trees to accompany the Capitol Christmas Tree from Oregon, ensuring that professionally-grown trees would be a part of the festivities.





global_munchkins • Follow
Temecula, California

global_munchkins HOLIDAY TRADITIONS-
[AD] one of my favorite holiday traditions is loading the kids up to head to our local Christmas tree lot. 🌲

For years now we have gone through the exact same routine. We put on our matching Santa Hats, grab to-go cups of hot cocoa and hop in the car. My husband blasts Christmas music as we drive around to look at the neighborhood holiday lights to get us in the mood and then we drive over to the Christmas tree lot.

The kids take their time carefully analyzing each tree until finally they agree on the absolute most perfect tree on the lot. They love watching as the Tree Lot Helpers trim the tree stump and load the Christmas tree onto the roof of our car.



1,540 likes

DECEMBER 7

Add a comment...

IT'S CHRISTMAS. KEEP IT REAL.



mightymultiples • Follow

napping! And, of course, we found our perfect family tree! @christmaskeepitreal.

To celebrate the experience of choosing the perfect real tree this year, the Christmas Tree Promotion Board is hosting the first Real Trees. Real Memories Sweepstakes. To enter, share a photo of your real Christmas tree moment on Instagram with #itsChristmasKeepitReal and #sweepstakes for the chance to win one of 10 \$250 cash gift cards. For official sweepstakes rules and more details on how to enter, swipe up on my story (also in highlights!).
Photography: @crystallinephoto.

#itschristmaskeepitreal #triplets
#twinsandmultiples #twinmom
#twinmomlife #multiples #babyfever
#babygoals #firstchristmas
#adorablebabies #cutebabies



3,956 likes

DECEMBER 10

Add a comment...



emilyboazman • Follow

emilyboazman Are you a real Christmas tree kinda Christmasher?? Growing up, we only ever had a real Christmas tree. AD I remember going to this little lot of trees with my parents and picking one out, and being SO excited "helping" dad bring it in. So when Jake and I got married, I was very happy that he was totally on board with getting real trees for Christmas. There is just something amazing about that smell...and the excitement of searching for the "perfect" tree. Crew helped Jake pick this one. Short and fat;) It's a tradition that I really don't want to break, I want our kids to have the same happy memories about real trees, as I do! ***To celebrate the experience of choosing the perfect real tree this year, the Christmas Tree

Dormation Board is hosting the first Real



Liked by freibrothersreserve and 1,416 others

DECEMBER 10

Add a comment...



You Can't Beat Great Press

Perhaps the "win" of the season was the great press coverage of the campaign. The national media latched on to the story of how the real Christmas tree industry was attempting to win the millennial market with a modest \$1 million campaign. This story grew as the season heated up and features on the CBS Morning Show, National Public Radio and Associated Press added more than 3 million impressions of our campaign.

Education: Teaming with NCTA

For the last three years, the CTPB has teamed up with the National Christmas Tree Association on two critical projects by funding the cost of the "Voice of the Industry" and participation in the National Fire Prevention Association trade show.

Each holiday season, the NCTA responds to calls and emails from the media and consumers; posing questions regarding Christmas trees and the industry. The availability of a qualified team member answering these questions is a tremendous asset to the entire industry as

factual information is relayed and inaccurate stories are addressed.

In June, the CTPB funds the industry's participation in the NFPA Trade Show, where industry members talk with fire fighters, fire chiefs and others in the industry. The primary emphasis is to help the fire industry better understand our product from a safety standpoint and to discourage them from participating in "tree burn" demonstrations for the media with dry trees during the holiday season. 🌲

First North Carolina Fraser Fir Featured in the White House in 1971



"It was a family trip to Washington." Pictured above in the Blue Room: Waightstill Avery, Herman Dellinger, Kermit Johnson, Patty J. Wilson, Dr. Charles Wilson, Kermit Johnson, Pam F Johnson, John Dellinger, Doris Wilson, Greg Wilson and Dana Wilson.



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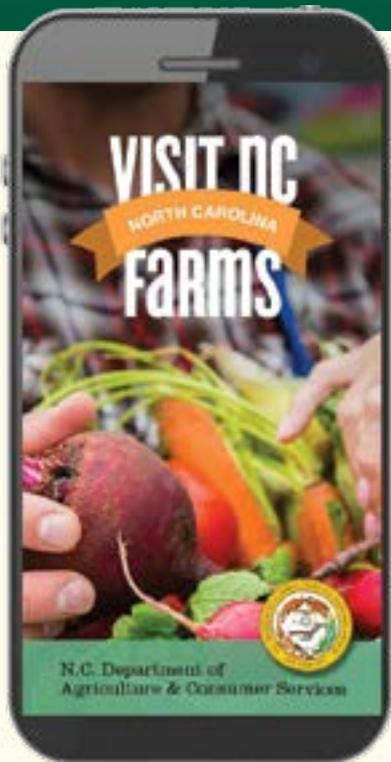
Visit NC Farms App

A mobile marketing tool for choose and cut and local agritourism destinations

As we move closer to year 2020, tourism trends are centering more and more around technology. Many of us have adapted to this new technological landscape by engaging on social media, creating mobile-friendly websites, and rethinking our individual and collective marketing approach. According to Annie Baggett, *NCDA's Agritourism Specialist*, digital tools that allow customers to build custom itineraries before traveling to unique, experience-based destinations with local connections are becoming expected.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services is trailblazing with a new digital promotional tool that connects consumers to your farm via the *Visit NC Farms* mobile app. The app is especially exciting for choose-and-cut farms, as it will allow tree customers to connect to the how, when, where and why you do business. With more visitors relying on their cell phones, this app has the potential to provide a cost-effective and easy marketing tool to direct those tourists to our tree farms.

As part of the Visit NC Farms App campaign, the 'High Country' counties of Ashe, Watauga, and Avery counties, along with 10 other NC counties, will be early adopter communities for the app launch expected by early summer. Extension and its partners are currently identifying farms, agriculture assets and other connections to local food & agritourism in preparation for the official launch. Ashe and Watauga County Extension Directors Travis Birdsell and Jim Hamilton have secured generous sponsorships for the start-up costs for the mobile app from: Carolina Farm Credit, Watauga Farm Bureau, Ashe Farm Bureau, the Watauga County Farmer's Market, the Watauga Christmas Tree Association (via the Watauga County TDA), Ashe Chamber of Commerce, Ashe County Economic Development, NC Cooperative Extension Watauga and Ashe Centers. There will be an annual maintenance fee for the app and room for individual farm or organiza-



tion sponsorship, including banner ads within the app.

Along with choose-and-cut, the app will allow visitors to identify other agritourism & local food destinations such as restaurants, vineyards, breweries, corn mazes, and other farms that offer tourism experiences and accept visitors. Basically, anyone who downloads the app to their phone will be able to access user-friendly descriptions of farms and other businesses tied to agriculture—along with a map synced with their phone's GPS on how to get there!

Promotion of this app will be incredibly important moving forward. The more visitors who download the app, the more reach it will have. To give it a 'test drive', you can go to the App Store on your Android or iPhone

to get the ever-expanding Visit NC Farms app. The pilot version is available now with expansion to more communities this spring & early summer. Keep your eye out for promotional materials that the NCDA is providing to help us get more customers downloading the app.

For questions and/or interest in expanding this app opportunity to our other western NC 'tree counties' you can contact Jim Hamilton or Travis Birdsell at their Extension offices. 🌲

5 reasons why the Visit NC Farms app is important to your farm and local community:

- Has the potential to positively impact the economies of our counties by driving the 47 million visitors and over 10 million residents to key agriculture and local food based destinations.
- Built to support the priority revenue streams of farms, with local, regional and state level administrative and promotional support.
- Prioritizes farms as part of local agriculture, tourism and economic development partnerships.
- Strengthens the awareness and the connection to local food and all that is grown, raised, caught, made and experienced on farms.
- Promotes farms how, where, when and why they do business, with daily update and marketing push notification capabilities.



NCCTA 2019

Winter Meeting Highlights

NCCTA 2019 Winter Meeting Sponsors:

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Windy Gap Tree Farm

Bronze \$250

Cline Church Nursery
Cornett Carolina Trees
New River Tree Company
Ross Auto
Yates Christmas Tree Farm

Friends of NCCTA \$100

Dayton Bag & Burlap Company
Farm Bureau-Watauga
First Benefits Insurance Mutual
Fraser Knoll
Gra-Mac Irrigation
Greenscape Tools, Inc.
Mountain Kubota

NCCTA 2019 Winter Meeting Exhibitors:

Thank you to each of our exhibitors and allied business partners for their support of the real Christmas tree industry and the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association.

ACT Construction Equipment
Carolina Farm Credit
Cherokee Manufacturing
Dayton Bag & Burlap
Farm Bureau-Watauga County
First Benefits Insurance Mutual
First Citizens Bank
First Pioneer Insurance Agency
Fraser Knoll
Greenscape Tools, Inc.
Gulf Relay Logistics
H&H Farm Machine Co.
Kritter Cropdusting
Lee Publications/Country Folks Grower
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NCCTA 2019 Winter Meeting Highlights



Thank You To Our Generous Sponsors!



Sunbelt Rentals



Carolina Farm Credit



Nutrien Ag Solutions

**On behalf of the NCCTA Board of Directors, staff and members,
a very big THANK YOU
to everyone who contributed and helped make the meeting a great success.**

Additional recognition for special contributions:

Nathan Huff and Brandon Davis, Phelps Dunbar
Joy Goforth, Phil Wilson, Whitney Swink, Chad Taylor,
NCDA&CS Plant Industry Division
Dr. Jill Sidebottom, NCSU
Dr. Adam Dale, University of Florida
Jeff Owen, NCSU
Dr. Joe Neal, NCSU Dept. of Horticultural Science
CTPB members Della Deal and Jim Rockis
Amber Scott, Winter Meeting Chair
Larry Smith, Mountain Top Fraser Fir

Dr. Brian E Jackson, NCSU Dept. of Horticultural Science
Dr. John Frampton & Jack Wang, NCSU Dept. of Forestry
Jennifer Viets, NCSU College of Natural Resources
Dee Clark, Douglas R. Clark Nursery
Melissa Barr, Barr Evergreens and Rebecca Fowler,
Windy Gap Tree Farm
Rodney Buchanan, Buck's Tree Farm
Linville River Nursery
Sunbelt Rentals
Mountain Kubota



NCCTA 2019

Winter Meeting Highlights

Raffle

Thank you to everyone who supported the raffle that raised nearly \$2,000 for the NCCTA!

Congratulations to grand prize winner Larry Smith, who won two raffle prizes of \$500 and \$50, though he would argue that taking his tree to the white house in 2018 was the ultimate prize!

Other winners included Avery Barr, Charles Fowler, David Cartner and Jeff Owen.

Silent Auction

We'd like to thank our silent auction donors Sunbelt rentals, Linville River Nursery and Mountain Kubota for items they donated that raised more than \$500 for the NCCTA promotional fund!



*Eric Ball,
NCDA&CS Pesticide Division*



*Travis Birdsell with AGRAS Drone,
funded by CTPB*



*Marnee Dvorak,
Wildcat Advanced Land Clearing*



*Mary Lou & Wayne Matthews,
First Pioneer Insurance Agency*



*Allyson Warriner, Bonnie Huntley, Wallace Greer & Vanessa Clark,
First Citizens Bank*

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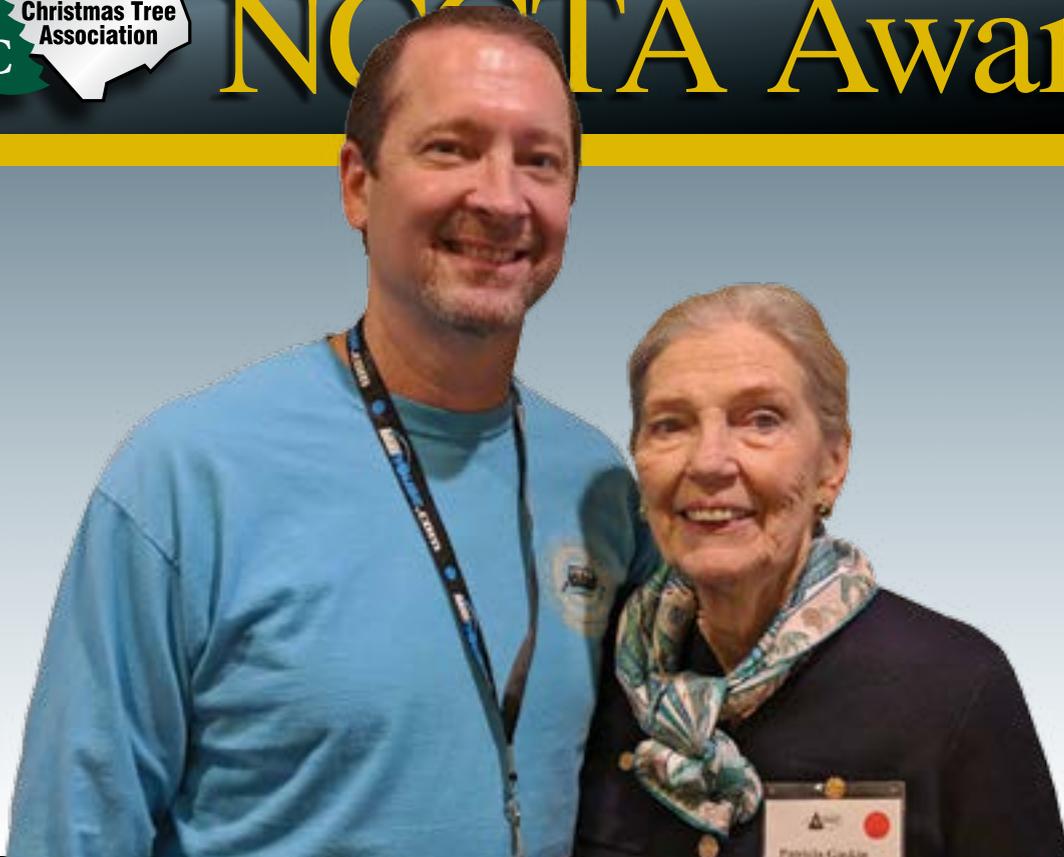
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Outstanding Contributor Award: Pat Gaskin

As I think about folks who have made big contributions to our industry, somewhere in the conversation the name Pat Gaskin has to come up. We all as growers reap the benefits of her contributions and don't even know it. In this ever-evolving political climate, she has her finger on the pulse of anything that could affect Christmas tree farmers and makes sure we know about it. She does this by not only keeping up with the various news outlets she follows but also by being totally hands on. I know that there have been numerous times that she feels compelled to travel to Raleigh or even to Washington DC to knock on doors of senators and congressmen to make sure they understood the issues at hand that would affect us as growers. Folks she does this on her own, with her own money, because she feels it's that important to be involved for the industry.

If I had to choose one topic nearest to Pat's heart it would be labor issues. She has worked tirelessly to help

insure that we all have a legal and reliable source of labor for our industry. Any labor issue that arises, you can be sure that Pat knows about it, knows what politicians are for or against it, and always keeps us informed. I don't know if other commodities have a Pat working for them, but if they don't, then they are certainly missing out! And if they do, then they are probably compensated for the same work that she does for nothing. Personally I dread the day when she hangs it up because I'm not exactly sure what we will do.

Pat does all of this sorting through the political volatility with a big smile on her face. I am sure I speak for everyone by saying that this award is well-deserved and on a personal note I want to say a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to a very special person I'm proud to call my friend.

— Johnny Wishon



Outstanding Public Official Award: State Senator Deanna Ballard

State Senator Deanna Ballard represents North Carolina's 45th District, which is comprised of Alleghany, Ashe, Surry, Watauga and Wilkes Counties. Senator Ballard was recognized for her ongoing support of the Christmas Tree Industry.

Senator Ballard launched her political career as a volunteer for George W. Bush's Presidential Advance

Team and quickly worked her way up to become a special assistant to the President and director of scheduling and advance for First Lady Laura Bush. She is the daughter of a school teacher and a logger and she learned to appreciate hard work from her parents. She currently serves on several North Carolina State legislative committees.

"The North Carolina Christmas Tree Association (NCCTA) values and appreciates Senator Ballard's attentiveness to our industry's needs, as well as her participation in our semi-annual meetings and farm visits. She has also participated in special events including Trees for Troops and the White House Tree Selection and presentation. She has been very supportive to our industry's concerns and we recognize her efforts in assisting the Christmas Tree Industry and Agriculture."

— Harry Yates



NOCTA Awards



Environmental Stewardship Award: C & J Christmas Tree Farm

The 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award was presented to Jeff Brown, his son Daniel, and all the family members that successfully help manage C & J Christmas Tree Farm just outside of Boone. Daniel Brown moved his family back to Boone with a strong commitment to growing the family business, taking over the day to day operations of the Christmas tree farm in order to ensure that the farm will remain in the family for generations to come. Jeff received cost share funding from the Watauga Soil and Water Conservation District, which allowed them to reestablish clover groundcover on six acres of tree fields. They also have made improvements to several of their farm roads for better customer access and erosion control. In 2018, the Browns received a grant

from the WNC AgOptions program, which along with sweat equity contributed by the entire family, enabled them to construct a building to expand their retail and work space. The Browns are committed to improving their IPM program with the help of NC Cooperative Extension Service. Over the years they have been gracious to allow their farm to be used for pesticide trials, county and state field tours & demonstrations, and have even hosted visitors from as far away as Guatemala. Environmental stewardship is a key tenet of their management strategy, and the Browns are deserving recipients of this award.

— Paige Patterson



Outstanding Service Award: Henry Helms

Henry Helms was first introduced to the Christmas tree industry in 1951 at the age of 10. In 1973 Henry bought a portion of this grandfather's estate in Lincoln County specifically to grow Christmas trees.

As choose and cut became more popular, a choose and cut committee was formed under the umbrella of the NCCTA Fraser Fir Promotional Committee. Henry Helms was the fourth chairman of that committee, and remained so for nearly 15 years. Even today, Henry still heads-up volunteer efforts and set-up for all consumer shows attended by NCCTA, and he annually volunteers

his time to promote ad sales for the NCCTA Choose & Cut directory.

Henry has been a long-standing member of the NCCTA, the Eastern North Carolina Christmas Tree Growers Association, the South Carolina Christmas Tree Association and the National Christmas Tree Association. He faithfully attends NCCTA semi-annual meetings, NCCTA board of directors meetings, and he has attended most of the National Christmas Tree Association meetings since 1960. He has also hosted several association meetings at his farm in Vale NC.

"Service is the lifeblood of any organization and Henry's service to NCCTA through hard work and dedication over many years has proven to be an immeasurable asset to the association and the Christmas tree industry. He is a true advocate of the real Christmas tree industry giving his time and energy to assist the association with education and promotion of real Christmas trees at consumer shows such as The NC State Fair, Mountain State Fair, Cleveland Co. Fair, Hickory Fair, and the Southern Christmas Show. These shows are big undertakings and we owe a debt of gratitude to Henry for many hours spent helping to make these shows a success for the association and industry."

— James Pitts

Christmas Trees Brighten Service Families' Holidays

You did it again! North Carolina growers donated more than 800 trees to the 14th annual Trees for Troops program in December. Trees were sent to service families on four bases this year. Thanks to the Upper Mountain Research Station staff who hosted the loading event. Alleghany County Ag students and local growers helped out by tagging, counting and loading the donated trees on the FedEx truck during the coldest morning in November. In Avery County, the Avery JROTC loaded the trees with the help of the NC Cooperative Extension Avery office staff and growers from Avery, Jackson, Mitchell and Watauga counties. North Carolina Primary School students



decorated tags with holiday messages and colorful drawings thanking our troops for their service.

Trees for Troops is a joint effort between the National Christ-

mas Tree Association's Christmas SPIRIT Foundation and FedEx. The North Carolina Christmas Tree Association is the North Carolina state Coordinator for Trees for Troops. 🌲

Upper Mountain Research Station

Goal: 350 **Final Destinations: Fort Gordon, Statesboro Academy, Naval Station Great Lakes** **Donated: 445**

Avery Cooperative Extension

Goal: 250 **Final Destination: MacDill AFB** **Donated: 332**

US Grand Total

16,399 Trees were donated and sent to US military bases in 2018



Bruner Sides Nursery
Buck Hill Tree Farm
Buck's Tree Farm
Carolina Fraser Fir Co., LLC
Cartner Christmas Tree Farm
Christmas Tree Hill Nursery
Cline Church Nursery
Cornett Carolina Trees

Cornett Deal Christmas Tree Farm
Cullowhee Valley Christmas Trees Inc.
Daintry Trees
Douglas R. Clark Nursery dba C&G Nursery
Happy Holiday Christmas Trees
Homer & Bonnie Sides Nursery
Kathy Shore Nursery
Lil Grandfather Choose and Cut Tree Farm
Mountain Top Fraser Fir

Peak Farms
Pressley Tree Farm LLC
Smokey Holler Tree Farm, LLC
Stone Mountain Farms
Sturgill Tree Farms
Windy Gap Tree Farm Inc.
Wishon Evergreens
Wolf Creek Tree Farm & Nursery, Inc.



Thank you for your service. we are always praying for you. Merry Christmas!
Love, Leigha. 



www.treesfortroops.org



Special thanks to:

Alleghany High School Ag Students
Avery County High School JROTC's
Amanda Estes & Blue Ridge Elementary School
Avery County 4-H Students

Brad Edwards
Jamie Vestal
NCDA & CS Upper Mountain Research Station Staff
NC Cooperative Extension, Avery County Staff
Office of Congressman Mark Meadows Staff

Smokey Holler Tree Farm & Staff
Rodney Buchanan
Dick Workman
Ryan Holquist
Will Christianson

Larry Smith Goes To



Larry Smith, owner of Mountain Top Fraser Fir in Newland, grew a 20' tall, 12' wide Fraser fir that was selected by White House Staff to be the Official White House Christmas Tree displayed in the Blue Room for the 2018 Christmas season. Larry was the 53rd member of the National Christmas Tree Association, and the 13th member of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association to present a Christmas tree to the White House, a tradition dating back to 1966.



Washington



TREE SELECTION

The tree was selected from Larry's farm in Newland by Timothy Harleth, Chief White House Usher, and Dale Haney, Superintendent of the White House Grounds, on September 24, 2018.



"I feel as though I have finally won the Super Bowl as it's one of the greatest honors of my life to represent the Christmas tree industry by providing the Official White House Christmas Tree in 2018" — Larry Smith



HARVEST, LOAD and TRANSPORT

On November 14, 2018 the 20' Fraser fir was harvested and loaded onto the NCD&CS Food Distribution Services truck and transported to Washington, D.C.



MEDIA COVERAGE

Numerous media outlets attended White House Christmas Tree related events in Newland, aired coverage and wrote articles. Additional media outlets, newspapers, and radio stations and countless social media coverage contributed to exposure and promotion of the NC Christmas Tree Industry and the 2018 White House Christmas Tree.

- Fox News – National
- New York Times – National
- RFD-TV/Southeast Produce Weekly
- WCNC NBC Charlotte
- WCYB-TV5 Tri-Cities Bristol
- WLOS-TV13 Asheville
- ABC-TV11 – Tri-Cities Raleigh
- WBTV 3 Charlotte
- WSOC-TV 9 Charlotte Spectrum News Charlotte
- Fox-TV 46 Charlotte
- Our State Magazine
- Avery Journal-Times
- Avery Post
- Caldwell Journal
- High Country Press
- Asheville Citizen Times
- NCDA&CS reporters and photographers



TREE DELIVERY

November 19, 2018 Larry traveled to Washington, D.C. accompanied by family and close friends, to personally present President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump with his real Fraser Fir Christmas Tree. Following tradition, the tree arrived in a horse-drawn carriage, as precious cargo sometimes does.







Pictured from left to right, back to front: Rusty Estes, Ann Estes, Vice President Mike Pence, Second Lady Karen Pence, Katirie Estes, Beau Estes, Amanda Estes, Athena Estes, Riley Estes and Colin Estes

Christmas AT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE

A long-standing NCTA tradition is the annual presentation of the Official Christmas Tree at the Vice President's residence.

In early December, the Estes Family presented a Fraser fir Christmas tree to the Vice President's Residence. This honor is given to the Reserve Grand Champion winner of the National Christmas Tree Contest. As tradition goes, the Estes Family was invited to a reception at the residence and met Vice President and Mrs. Pence. 🌲



Beau and Rusty Estes

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Anne Estes and grandson Riley pose with NC First Lady Kristin Cooper in the Governor's Mansion.

FRASER FIR

FEATURED IN THE

STATE CAPITOL

AND IN THE HAWKINS-HARTNESS HOUSE

Every year the winners of the annual North Carolina Christmas Tree Association (NCCTA) Tree & Wreath contest provide Fraser fir trees for the State Capitol Building and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor in Raleigh. In the 2018 Tree & Wreath Contest, the Estes Family of Peak Farms in Ashe County, dominated the contest and took first place in all four categories! In November 2018, the Estes family presented NC Governor Roy Cooper with a beautiful 12' Fraser fir tree for display in the Capitol Rotunda, as well as an assortment of wreaths that adorned the hallways and windows of the building. The Estes Family also presented the Office of the Lt. Governor, Dan Forest, with a 9' Fraser fir and several wreaths.

For many years, the Estes Family has served as the supplier for the NC Governor's Mansion by delivering North Carolina-grown Fraser fir Christmas trees to decorate the interior of the Mansion, as well as supplying the large 25' Fraser fir that is displayed on the lawn of the Capitol Building and lit in a tree lighting ceremony by the Governor each year.

Rusty and Beau Estes of Peak Farms will travel to Pennsylvania in August to compete in the National Christmas Tree Association Tree & Wreath Contest.

The NCCTA will hold its Summer Meeting, Tradeshow and Farm Tour in Avery County August 16 & 17, 2019, where the association will celebrate its 60th anniversary. 🌲



Above: Anne Estes and grandson Riley pose with NC Governor Roy Cooper in the Capitol Building rotunda; right: Beau and Rusty Estes were unable to attend.



THANK YOU



Many thanks to the **Sexton Family** for securing their legacy in the Christmas Tree Industry by establishing the **Sexton Family Christmas Tree Research Endowment** with the NC State Natural Resources Foundation.

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Natural Resources



Calendar of Events

June 4, 2019

Joint Board of Directors & Fraser Fir Promotional Committee Meeting

Blue Ridge Energy Building, Boone

August 15, 2019

Joint Board of Directors & Fraser Fir Promotional Committee Meeting

Best Western, Banner Elk

August 16-17, 2019

Summer Meeting, Tradeshow & Farm Tour

Best Western, Banner Elk

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Norway Spruce Transplants

FRASER FIR

Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate
(3-1, PL+1).....	8-14"	\$110.00	\$760.00
(2-2, PL+2).....	8-15"	\$135.00	\$900.00
(P+2, P+3).....	12-22"	\$155.00	\$1050.00

CANAAN FIR

Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate
(2-1, P+1).....	8-14"	\$115.00	\$790.00
(P+2).....	10-18"	\$145.00	\$980.00
(P+2, P+3).....	12-22"	\$155.00	\$1100.00

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