

Limbs & Needles

FALL/WINTER 2021

Serving the Christmas Tree Industry in the South



INSIDE:

NC State search for the next Mountain Conifer IPM Extention Specialist

Ten-Year Cone Control Conclusions: Coverage is Key

Cost Containment: Worker's Compensation

Summer Meeting Highlights

First Pioneer

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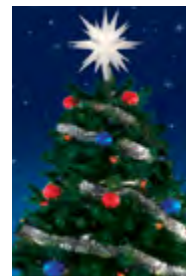
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The mission of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association is to promote "real" Christmas trees through marketing and education. We will contribute to the success of the Christmas Tree Industry by providing ethical, professional, and visionary leadership.

Limbs & Needles

Keeping Christmas Real Since 1959

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Front Cover Photo: *Welcome banner at Frosty's Choose & Cut, host of the summer meeting social. 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.

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President's Message

Amber Scott



"And life goes on"...that's what my Granny and my Mom have told me multiple times when faced with less than ideal circumstances. I would categorize these past 2 years as less than ideal! Still we have persevered, realized new possibilities, made progress, and strengthened our relationships. It is now our responsibility to carry on, using the lessons we have learned. Recognize the role we play in the lives of others, even if from a distance. What we do and say has impact.

We can all be proud of the role that our North Carolina Christmas Tree Association plays in our industry, our businesses, our families, our communities. NCCTA garners credibility and respect within the Ag community and we play a significant role on legislative platforms. When we decide to take a position on an issue to advocate for our members, our voice is heard and taken seriously. I have seen proof of that over the last 2 years. When we decide to create and implement an entire promotional concept, we spend years on it and volunteer our money to see it come to pass! Now we find ourselves the beneficiaries of many years' worth of efforts, which is still ongoing within our association by the Fraser Fir Promotional Committee. When we decide to plan an event during a pandemic, we pull off a first-class meeting with national attention, raise more than \$65,000 in Sponsorships, put together an exceptional agenda and farms tours, and host an unforgettable social event. To top it off, we secured another North Carolina Fraser Fir for the White House – Congratulations to Rusty & Beau Estes! Per Sandy Stewart, Assistant Commissioner of the NCDA, in a letter to Jennifer Greene, "You folks pulled it off like pros!" Yeah, life goes on!

You may be reading this just before harvest or more likely just after as you dig *Limbs & Needles* out of the pile. Either way, I say "Thank you" to you for your role in the NCCTA. What you say and do has impact. The impact of many has brought this association to a great place to-

day. Even as competitors, we have come together for a common goal to further the marketing and promotion of North Carolina Christmas trees. NCCTA is in a better financial position than we have been in years. Our membership numbers are stable and in fact we gained a few grower members in 2021. We have unprecedented access to research funding and a national pool of researchers. Our support from our extension services, universities and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture is unwavering. All seats on our Board of Directors and Fraser Fir Promotional Committee are filled and active. We are reaping the benefits of a marketing campaign and capitalizing on its momentum with our tailored NC Fraser Fir messaging. And my crystal ball tells me that I can safely say we have all sold every tree that we needed to this 2021 season! Yay! Life goes on!

I congratulate Dee Clark on his new role as President of the NCCTA as of January 1, 2022. We must all pledge to give our support and input to Dee as he and you all did for me. I appreciate the support and input received from each of you as I have served. This experience has truly refined me and I have learned so much in these 2 years. There are many "thank yous" that I owe and I hope to do these in person soon!

With all this said, I implore each of you to stay active, get active, pay your share, and play your role in the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association to the best of your ability. The NCCTA has played a major role in bringing us to the top of the mountain today. If we all work together we can maintain our place here at the top. It's a great place to be and let us not fail to thank the One who makes all things possible! I leave with you these words from Jesus, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." John 15:4. God Bless You! 🌲

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Executive Director's Report

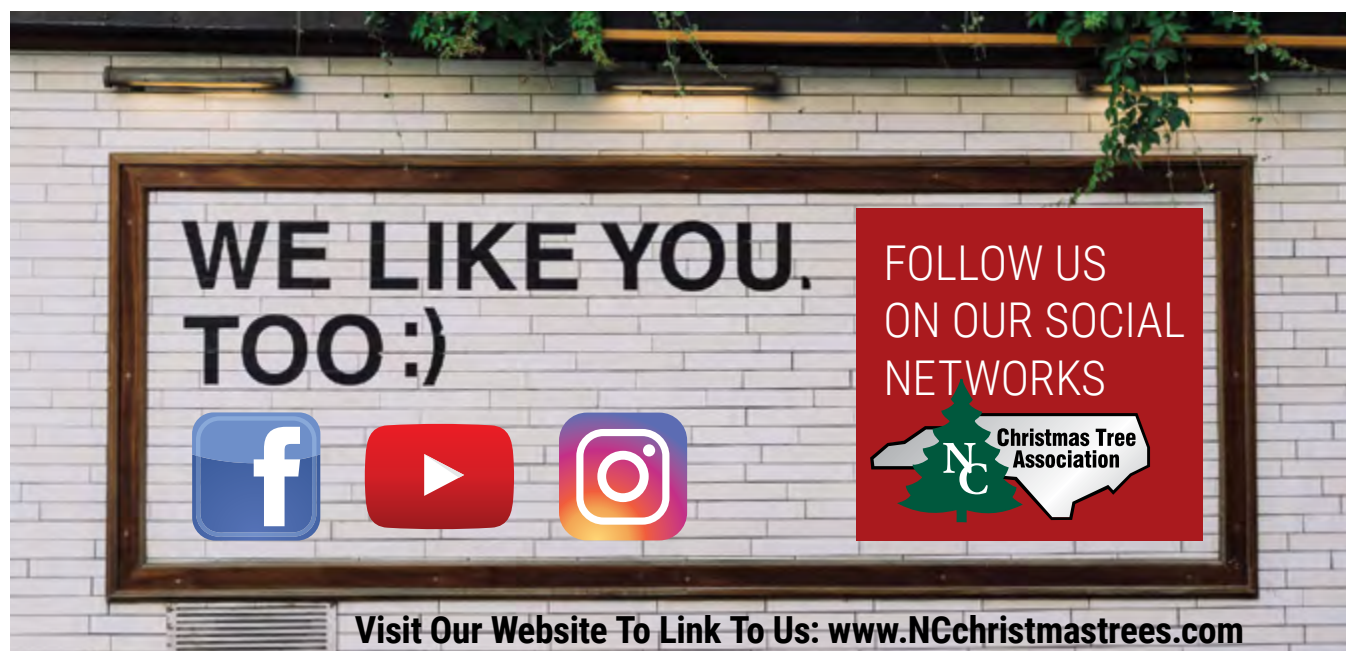
Jennifer Greene

After a largely successful summer meeting, we now prepare to jump right into the hustle of another Christmas season. I would like to thank everyone who worked tirelessly to help put together a very rewarding and prosperous summer meeting. It was wonderful to see old and new friends in person after being separated for so long. Perseverance is defined as doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. I am proud to say that despite many challenges, NCCTA persevered in 2021.

The first half of the year I spent working to finalize a video project consisting of short clips created with the intent to build brand awareness among millennial families. I am pleased to report that the video project is complete, and the videos will be promoted on NCCTA social media outlets this season. If you are a social media user and do not already follow NCCTA, 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 are offered to you as a member. NCCTA is active on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

In 2020, COVID put a damper on consumer shows and fairs, but I'm excited to say that 2021 has provided the opportunity for NCCTA to have a presence at the Mountain State Fair in Fletcher, the NC State Fair in Raleigh, and the Southern Christmas Show in Charlotte where we can promote NC Fraser fir.

Two-time National Christmas Tree Association Grand Champions, Rusty and Beau Estes, owners of Peak Farms, have once again earned the right to present an 18 1/2-foot Fraser fir to the White House for display in The Blue Room, making this tree lucky number three! They previously provided Fraser fir trees for the Blue Room in 2008 and 2012. I am looking forward to being a part of the White House Christmas Tree events this year. The selection took place on October 20th. The cutting will take place on November 17th, and the presentation to the First Lady is to be announced. Stay tuned for updates and announcements and look for all the events to be featured on NCCTA social media and in the next Spring/Summer 2022 edition of *Limbs & Needles*. 🌲



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.
- **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.
- ✓ NCCTA 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

Responding to the Media

What Consumers Can Expect

With just weeks to go until the real Christmas tree shopping season hits, industry experts are confident there will be a real Christmas tree for everyone who wants one this year.

Indeed, doom-and-gloom predictions have come and gone before in light of tight supplies and unexpected challenges, and each time they've been unfounded. But, like the farmers tending to this year's harvest, consumers may need to adapt a bit:

- Size and species variety may differ this year compared to years past. This will be a good season to try something new. For example, in recent years growers have seen increased demand for more "natural-looking" trees, which are more open and layered. That style of tree is expected to be more widely available this season than ever before.
- Some individual retailers may experience tight supplies. If a particular location doesn't have the type of tree you're looking for, visit [ItsChristmasKeepitReal.com](https://www.itschristmaskeepitreal.com) and enter your zip code to find a real Christmas tree retailer near you.
- With the artificial market hit hard by supply-chain disruption this year, and the real Christmas tree market returned to optimism, it's an especially relevant season for newcomers to turn to natural trees. Research commissioned by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board earlier this year revealed that 97% of those consumers who previously bought artificial Christmas trees and switched to a real Christmas tree during the pandemic said they enjoyed the experience, and nearly 90% wish they had started purchasing a real Christmas tree sooner (source: True Global Intelligence).

You may have seen several articles or news stories recently about supply chain problems that are making it difficult to get many things timely. The media became

very interested in how these delays are going to reduce the number of artificial trees that will arrive from China in time for the Christmas season and that those that are available will cost significantly more. NCTA was contacted by the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN, NBC, *Consumer Reports* and several other media outlets about this topic which became a great platform to highlight that real trees will be available this year and we have never run out of them. Here is a link to the WSJ article <https://www.wsj.com/articles/supply-chain-strains-hit-prices-inventories-of-artificial-christmas-trees-11631698200>

If you are contacted by the media here are a few important talking points you can use on the topics the media has been asking about:

- Real trees are grown in the US and Canada and are not shipped from China like artificial trees. The supply chain issues affecting artificial trees do not apply to real trees.
- While the supply of real trees is tight, there will be enough trees for everyone who wants one.
- We have never run out of real Christmas trees. Some farms or tree lot locations will sell out early, but others in the area will have trees available.
- The extreme hot weather and wildfires in the Northwest did not affect the whole Christmas tree industry. Trees from the rest of the country will be available.
- Plan to shop for a real Christmas tree after Thanksgiving and take proper care of it so it will remain fresh through the season.

The above information was provided by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board

Responding to Questions About Market Supply

In an effort to be proactive and help our grower members prepare for this hot topic story again in 2021,

I have put together the following talking points. Hopefully this will help reduce the media's use of the term "shortage" and encourage them to see it as a tight supply situation. They want to make the story focus on higher prices due to the shortage which I am concerned may cause some consumers to decide not to purchase a real tree during the short supply cycle. The goal is to help the media understand the impact of the production cycle and recession and to take the sensationalism out of their coverage.

NCCTA statement: Recent price increases are due to a tighter supply of harvestable Christmas trees. The current tight supply of trees is a result of fewer trees being planted 8 to 10 years ago due to a combination of excess supply at that time and the recession both pushing prices downward, along with some growers exiting the business. It can take up to a decade for live Christmas trees to grow to market size.

We feel confident that everyone who wants a real Christmas tree will be able to purchase one by shopping earlier to get a better selection.

Additional talking points and facts for North Carolina:

- North Carolina Christmas tree growers will still be cutting four million or more trees!
- There will still be trees at farmers' markets, retail lots, chain stores, and chose and cut farms all across North Carolina.
- NC Fraser firs ARE available for purchase - Shop early for the best selection!
- Our industry is in a great place. Demand is exceeding supply nationwide and we are excited that consumers are excited about choosing a Real Tree.
- North Carolina Christmas tree sales total in excess of \$86 million dollars (Source: 2017 USDA Census of Ag). This calculation does not include sales of value-added products produced by North Carolina Christmas tree growers including wreaths, roping, swags, table decorations, etc.
- The North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry is ranked second in the nation in number of trees harvested and produces 26.7% of the real Christmas trees grown in the United States.
- North Carolina Christmas tree growers harvest over 4 million (4,031,864) trees annually (Source: 2017 USDA census of Ag)
- Fraser fir trees represent over 94% (94.4) of all species grown in North Carolina, and over 25% (25.2) of all trees grown in the United States.
- North Carolina has over 850 (854) Christmas Tree growers, with approximately 50 million trees growing on over 38,000 (38,893) acres

Know Your Sources

- Established in 2015, the **Christmas Tree Promotion Board** (CTPB) is a national research and promotion program whose mission is to share the benefits of fresh Christmas trees with consumers through promotion and public relations, while engaging in research to better serve our customers and growers. The USDA provides oversight of the CTPB to ensure transparency and accuracy in its communications. This press release was developed and distributed by the CTPB.
- The **National Christmas Tree Association** (NCTA) is the national trade association representing the Christmas tree industry. NCTA represents more than 700 active member farms, 29 state and regional associations, and more than 4,000 affiliated businesses that grow and sell Christmas trees or provide related supplies and services. The NCTA represents the Real Christmas Tree community with one voice to protect and advocate on the industry's behalf.
- The **American Christmas Tree Association** (ACTA) is a 501(c)(3) corporation run by CEO Thomas Harman. Harman is the founder of Balsam Hill, a seller of artificial Christmas trees. The majority of artificial Christmas trees are made overseas. 🌲



National News

Wilson Barr

NCTA News

NCTA is highly focused on the things the industry has said matter most—public policy/governmental affairs, voice of the industry, the White House tree, fire issues and fire codes—and building a meaningful partnership with the state and regional associations.

In addition to advocating on behalf of the industry in Washington, DC on important matters like labor, pesticide regulations and other governmental policies that affect the Christmas tree business, NCTA is the “voice of the industry” to the media and consumers. During the holiday season NCTA receives hundreds of media inquiries creating the opportunity to correct misinformation and disseminate positive messages that are used in many media articles.

NCTA also sponsors the National Christmas Tree and Wreath Contest. The NCTA Grand Champion Grower provides the official Christmas tree to the White House each year creating the largest media coverage of any agricultural promotion event, drawing an audience as large as the Super Bowl to see a farm-grown Christmas tree delivered to the First Lady by an NCTA member.

The contest was recently held in North Carolina, the winners were:

2021 Grand Champion Grower

Rusty & Beau Estes, North Carolina

2021 Reserve Champion Grower

Chuck Berry, Georgia

2022 Grand Champion Grower

Paul and Sharon Shealer, Pennsylvania

2022 Reserve Champion Grower

Alex Church and Amber Scott, North Carolina

Grand Champion Decorated Wreath

Joe Freeman, North Carolina

Reserve Champion Decorated Wreath

Glenn & Jay Bustard, Pennsylvania

Grand Champion Undecorated Wreath

Gary Hague, Pennsylvania

Reserve Champion Undecorated Wreath

Joe Freeman, North Carolina

2022–2023 NCTA Officers Elected

Officer elections were held at the August 5th NCTA Board meeting. Heading the new officer team will be Steve Meier who will take office as NCTA's President on January 1, 2022, John Wyckoff will become President-Elect and Scott Powell will join the Executive Committee as a Vice President along with incumbents Joncie Underwood and Bob Schaefer, Dugald Kell, Jr. will become the Immediate Past President.

Free NCTA Membership Drawing

NCTA will enter every 2022 membership paid by March 1, 2022 in a drawing to receive a free membership in 2023. The goal of this program is to encourage NCTA members to renew their 2022 memberships timely and reward one lucky member with their next year's membership for free. Look for more details in the future, members of the NCTA Board of Directors are not eligible to participate in the drawing.

COVID-19 Best Practices

Unfortunately, coronavirus has not disappeared as the Delta variant ramps up a resurgence in the spread of the virus. The COVID-19 Best Practice Recommendations NCTA developed for 2020 were helpful to many farms and tree lots. We are making them available again for 2021, see pages 14 and 15. 🌲

National Christmas Tree Association

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Tim O'Connor

www.realchristmastrees.org



Congratulations to our North Carolina Winners!

National Christmas Tree & Wreath Contest Winners Selected



2021 Grand Champion Grower
Rusty & Beau Estes
Peak Farms, Jefferson, NC
FRASER FIR



2022 Reserve Grand Champion Grower
Alex Church & Amber Scott
Cline Church Nursery, Inc., Fleetwood, NC
SPRUCE



Grand Champion Decorated Wreath
Joe Freeman
Mistletoe Meadows, Laurel Springs, NC



Grand Champion Undecorated Wreath
Joe Freeman
Mistletoe Meadows, Laurel Springs, NC

NCTA Awards:

Outstanding Service Award

Pat Gaskin • Laurel Springs Nursery • NC

"I joined the NCTA Board in 2005, and Pat Gaskin has been a very good friend and a very close acquaintance. I'm from Maine by the way, I'm a northerner, and she is a very fine southern lady whom I respect." —*Dugald Kell*

Lifetime Achievement Award

Chal Landgren • Oregon State University • OR

"Normally, the recipient of this award has put a long time in and spent their career working in a university setting or extension, really contributing significantly to the industry. This year our recipient, Chal Landgren, is definitely one of them. Chal has been a long-standing member and he's also a grower and he has been on the faculty of the OSU as a Christmas tree researcher for a very long time." —*Tim O'Connor*

Iron Horse Award

Richard "Dick" Moore • Moore Tree Farm • NY

"Richard Moore has worked long and hard, serving many years on the national board, including as president. A wonderful person who is also very personable, Richard has worked tirelessly for this association." —*Dugald Kell*



Check your inbox for more details coming soon from the NCTA office

SAVE THE DATES:

November 30

Upper Mountain Research Station,
Laurel Springs

December 2

Avery County Cooperative Extension,
Newland



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NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Christmas Tree Lot COVID-19

BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Christmas Tree Association has developed these best practice recommendations for tree lot operators to use as guidance to adapt their business to the circumstances they will face during the 2020 Christmas season due to COVID-19.

Tree lot operators must protect the health and safety of their employees, provide customers with the confidence they need so they can enjoy selecting a tree without risk and demonstrate to state and local officials they are conducting business responsibly. We highly encourage you to develop the best possible response to these recommendations:

DEVELOP A COVID-19 PLAN

- May be needed for lot permits
- Designate a qualified COVID-19 coordinator to develop and implement the lot's COVID-19 plan
- Plan should consider NCTA's best practice recommendations
- Meet CDC and local regulations
- Provide personal protective equipment for employees
- Establish sanitizing protocols, also provide and encourage customers to use hand sanitizer upon entering the lot
- Adapt as changes occur

OFFER A DRIVE-THRU SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

- Having this capability and communicating it will attract at-risk and concerned customers
- Explore alternatives to traditional face-to-face sales if drive-thru is not possible

PAYMENT TRANSACTION

- Install physical barriers between cashiers and customers
- Provide masks and gloves for all checkout staff
- Use a touchless credit card payment system (there are many options available which should be explored before the season)
- Limit cash sales to exact change only
- No paper receipts or customer signatures
- Consider pre-orders, payment by phone, on-line orders and home delivery
- Disinfect payment area often

SIGNS

- Designate social distancing, entries, exits and traffic flow patterns
- Establish one-way traffic with separate entry and exit points if possible
- Identify hand sanitizer stations, payment locations and methods and other things of importance for customers to know

EMPLOYEE ILLNESS PLAN

- Create a plan and ensure all employees are familiar with it
- The plan should include how to handle employees who are ill or become ill at work
- Having a plan in place will position everyone to respond properly
- Clearly educate and provide employees current information about COVID-19 as suggested by the CDC

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Follow CDC and local guidance for customer numbers on the lot at a given time
- To maintain 6-foot social distancing 113 square feet per person is required
- Lot layout and traffic flow should be planned to facilitate social distancing
- Limit the number of people in line for payment with social distance spacing signs
- Entrance to the lot may need to be regulated at peak times to maintain the proper head count in the lot
- Encourage regular customers to shop at off-peak times to assist with crowd management



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www.realchristmastrees.org • info@realchristmastrees.org

NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Choose & Cut Farm COVID-19

BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Christmas Tree Association has developed these best practice recommendations for Choose & Cut farms to use as guidance to adapt their business to the circumstances they will face during the 2020 Christmas season due to COVID-19.

Choose & Cut farms must protect the health and safety of their employees, provide customers with the confidence they need so they can enjoy selecting a tree without risk and demonstrate to state and local officials they are conducting business responsibly. We highly encourage you to develop the best possible response to these recommendations:

DEVELOP A COVID-19 PLAN

- Frequently sanitize items and areas such as hand saws, tree cart handles, counter tops, door handles and restrooms
- Limit the number of customers permitted inside buildings, minimize or eliminate wagon rides, fire pits, or other places that people gather
- Supply no touch garbage receptacles
- Offer Santa either on closed circuit TV or live at a distance
- Do not erect photo op "cut-outs" where faces come in contact
- Offer individually bagged food items instead of self-serve loose items such as cookies
- Provide a server for drinks instead of offering self-serve
- Require all dogs to be on a leash, or discourage dogs, as they cause unnecessary interaction among customers
- Encourage customers to tie their own trees on their vehicles by offering an instructional video

SALES & PAYMENT

- Install windows or plexiglass partitions at sales counters
- Offer Curbside pick-up
- Use a touchless pay credit card system
- Price products to limit the use of coins
- Eliminate the need for customer signatures on credit card transactions

PROTECTING CUSTOMERS

- Take staff temperature daily, provide PPE for all employees, do not permit staff exhibiting symptoms of illness to come to work
- Encourage customers to visit during non-peak hours

- Create special hours for select customers (elderly and at risk)
- Advise customers that you reserve the right to deny service to anyone displaying signs of illness or not following farm guidelines
- Have sanitizing stations available to staff and customers
- Request masks be worn by those able to without adverse health impacts
- Require masks be worn when social distancing is not possible, as on wagon rides to fields or in checkout lines
- Offer masks or neck gaiters for sale (with farm name or logo)

COMMUNICATIONS

- Discuss procedures with staff to keep employees safe
- Train staff on new procedures to keep customers safe
- Communicate early the proactive steps your farm is taking to keep customers safe through website, newsletter, social media, phone message, local paper, etc.
- Recommend signs at farm: wear mask inside buildings, limited numbers in gift shop (follow your state/county regulations), maintain social distancing, manage customer flow (one-way traffic in and out)
- Stress no visitors to farm if ill or had contact with someone ill with COVID-19
- Consider sign in sheet with family name and phone number. Break into morning/afternoon each day

RESOURCES

- Additional information is available on CDC, State and Local Health Department websites
- **There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted on plants or plant products** Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension/New York State Integrated Pest Management



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MANAGING THE LITTLE THINGS:



NC State search for the next Mountain Conifer IPM Extension Specialist

Justin Whitehill

Assistant Professor,
Christmas Tree Genetics Program Lead,
NC State University

NC State University Strongly Supports the Christmas Tree Industry in North Carolina

After working with early innovators, NC Extension first promoted the potential of Fraser fir Christmas trees to Western NC farmers in 1954. Since that time, NC State Extension and NC State University have continued to provide critical support to the North Carolina Christmas tree industry. Over time that support evolved as the popularity of Fraser fir grew. The increased popularity of the premier Christmas tree species in the country has led to an equal need for expert help.

One critical pillar of expert support came in the form of the Mountain Conifer Integrated Pest Management Extension Specialist. The position was initially created for Dr. Jill Sidebottom who was working as a technician for a Christmas tree IPM project at the time. She then served as an Extension Specialist for over 30 years, during which she made an indelible mark on the industry. She officially retired from the role in June 2021 and has left some big shoes to fill.

Filling Big Shoes

Dr. Sidebottom can never be replaced, but her legacy of support to the NC Christmas tree industry will continue on as NC State begins the process of hiring the next generation of Mountain Conifer IPM Extension Specialist. The importance of this position to the industry cannot be overstated. Avery County Christmas tree grower and retired Avery County Extension Director, Waightstill Avery said of Dr. Sidebottom's role:

"Jill has been really, really important to our industry. The industry had to bootleg specialists for years because we

were seen as a minor crop. Jill was a real kick in the pants to our industry when she was hired into the role of Mountain Conifer IPM Extension Specialist. She was able to see things that we didn't. She would identify problems and present solutions before we knew they were even there. She [was] extremely dedicated. Anytime we called her with a problem, we got the help we needed. As time has gone on, Fraser fir has become recognized as the best Christmas tree on the market. We as growers hope to get a person just as dedicated as Dr. Sidebottom to continue her legacy."

Past NC Christmas Tree Association President Rodney Buchanan had this to say about Dr. Sidebottom and the importance of the position to the continued success of the industry:

"This position has a rich history that the industry has come to rely upon in the face of new pests and an ever changing and complicated selection of treatment materials and techniques. Jill has left a lasting legacy by promoting both the environmental and economic benefits of implementing integrated pest management principles to the Fraser fir industry in NC. Additionally, Jill's work helped to reduce the amounts of pesticides used in the industry. These examples illustrate just a couple of Jill's many contributions."

NC State College of Natural Resources Administration Christmas Tree Tour

Prior to her departure, and as a way to ensure that growers needs were heard and met, Dr. Sidebottom organized a 'Christmas Tree Tour' for NC State College of Natural Resources (CNR) Administrators. The tour took place over the course of two days (December 8th &



Dr. Jill Sidebottom (middle right) and Jeff Owen (middle left) answer CNR administration questions at the UMRS – NC State University Christmas Tree Genetics program joint Fraser fir seed orchard. Audience members include in the group on the right Brad Edwards, Travis Birdsell and Dr. Erin Sills (right to left). Audience members in the left group include Tracy Taylor, Dr. Rich Bonanno, and Kaleb Rathbone (left to right).

9th, 2020) and included stops at the Avery County Extension Office; Christmas tree farms in Avery, Watauga, and Ashe Counties; and ended with a visit to the Upper Mountain Research Station (UMRS) in Ashe County. The purpose was not just to view exciting, ongoing research activities being conducted on Fraser fir Christmas trees, but also talk to industry leaders. NC State administrators who attended the event included CNR Dean Dr. Myron Floyd, Associate Dean of CALS and Director of NC State Extension Dr. Rich Bonanno, Associate Dean of Extension Dr. Robert Bardon, and Department Head for the Dept. of Forestry and Environmental Resources (FER) Dr. Erin Sills.

Other NC State University representatives involved with the tour included Area Christmas Tree Production and Marketing Specialist, Jeff Owen, and Christmas Tree Genetics Program Lead, Dr. Justin Whitehill. County and State representatives in attendance included Avery County Extension Director Jerry Moody, Watauga

County Extension Director Jim Hamilton, Ashe County Extension Director Travis Birdsell, Ashe County IPM Program Assistant Brad Edwards, UMRS Director Tracy Taylor, and NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA & CS) Western N.C. Agricultural programs and small farms Assistant Commissioner Kaleb Rathbone. Dr. Sidebottom gave CNR Administrators a living snapshot of the NC Christmas Tree industry. It was evident to everyone in attendance that Dr. Sidebottom's former position fills a critical need for the industry.

The search for the next Mountain Conifer IPM Extension Specialist

The search for the next Mountain Conifer IPM Extension Specialist began almost immediately following Dr. Sidebottom's retirement in June 2021. Associate Dean of Extension, Dr. Robert Bardon, stated that filling this position is "an integral part of our efforts to support



Parting gifts. Following the December 2020 CNR Administration Christmas Tree Tour, Brad Edwards presented attendees with Fraser fir wreaths and kissing balls on behalf of the NC Christmas tree industry. Pictured from left to right: Jeff Owen, Travis Birdsell, Dr. Myron Floyd, Brad Edwards, Tracy Taylor, Kaleb Rathbone, Dr. Rich Bonanno, and Dr. Robert Bardon.

the Christmas tree Industry needs in North Carolina.” A search committee was formed by FER Department Head Dr. Erin Sills in early summer 2021. The committee is being chaired by Dr. Justin Whitehill, Christmas Tree Genetics Program Lead. The committee met several times throughout the summer to finalize the details of the position announcement (<https://jobs.ncsu.edu/postings/148486>) and discuss the best path forward for the hiring process.

The position was officially announced August 18th, 2021. Review of applications commenced on October 15th, 2021 and will continue until the position is filled. Interview dates will be scheduled after suitable candidates are selected. In consideration of Christmas tree harvest season, interviews will likely occur after the start of the New Year. The proposed start date is March to June, 2022. Inquiries about the position may be directed to Dr. Justin Whitehill, Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources at jwhiteh2@ncsu.edu.

What can NC Christmas Tree Growers do to help?

The search committee is strongly committed to having NC Christmas tree growers involved in this process. There will likely be some type of opportunity to meet candidates, watch their presentations, and provide comment. If you are reading this, and you are interested in having your voice and input heard, please reach out to Dr. Whitehill at jwhiteh2@ncsu.edu to let him know you would like to participate in the process. Dr. Whitehill and the committee will be meeting in the coming weeks and months to finalize a schedule for the remainder of the process. The more grower support we have during this hiring process, the better. So please, if you are interested feel free to reach out. You can also reach Dr. Whitehill by phone at 919-515-5851. We look forward to hearing from you! 🌲

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TEN-YEAR CONE CONTROL CONCLUSIONS: COVERAGE IS KEY

Jeff Owen

Area Extension Forestry Specialist,
Christmas Trees, NC State University

The Brad vs. Jerry sprayer competition

Sometimes a little friendly competition provides the challenge needed to get a job done better, and it came into play with our cone control treatments. Over a decade of cone control research funded by the NCCTA and the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, our volunteer pesticide applicators battled it out for the highest, most consistent cone kill each year—first with Solo backpack sprayers, and later with high pressure hose sprayers (). Both of our expert Christmas tree Extension pesticide applicators — Jerry Moody, Avery County Extension Director, and Brad Edwards, Three-County IPM Program Assistant — voiced their intention to “show him how to do it right” in so many words. All in good fun, of course. Jerry was the first to achieve 99% control using Axxe, but over the last two years, Brad has had a slight lead. Regardless of who won bragging rights each year, their mutual efforts pointed the way to effective treatments to kill cones.

Our spring cone control herbicide treatments targeted small, tender cones as they emerged from bud break. If you adequately cover these cones with the right contact herbicide, they die. If you miss (or partially miss)



Figure 1. *Spraying cones with a fatty acid herbicidal soap from a high-pressure hose sprayer*

cones, they live and grow. A “lick and a promise” just wasn’t enough. Dry, shrunk, red-brown cones clearly mapped areas of the tree that received full coverage. Lightly injured or completely healthy cones showed where gaps in coverage occurred.

To be fair, Jerry Moody’s recent cone treatments included the worst possible spray targets — 12- to 20-foot-tall Frasers covered in hundreds of cones treated under less-than-ideal conditions. Mountaintops are very windy places in the spring. Good coverage becomes

more difficult as tree size increases. Larger trees can have tighter clusters of cones. Pesticide spray has farther to travel to reach cones in the tops of big trees and hits the undersides of boughs first rather than upright cones. The steep angle of spray reduces an applicator’s observation of spray coverage with a corresponding reduction in accuracy. Both Brad and Jerry achieved their best results when the treated trees were less than nine feet tall rather than twelve feet or more.

Coverage is still the key.

A decade of cone control research

As we wrap up cone control research using Axxe and Scythe herbicides, the full story encompasses more than coverage. We evaluated herbicide rates, application volumes per tree, treatment timing, and cost. It has taken a full decade to confidently recommend an affordable rate for product such as Axxe.

When we started looking for ways to avoid hand-pulling cones in 2012, we weren't focused on using herbicides as pruning agents. Researchers in Michigan had used plant growth regulators (PGR's) to reduce numbers of cones by interrupting bud initiation. Not having cones develop sounded ideal, but then every tree would need to be treated. If a majority of trees produce stress-related cones the PGR approach could be feasible, but that is seldom the case in NC. Further, PGR's reduced cone crops but did not eliminate them and hand-pulling was still necessary.

By targeting emerging cones in the spring, only the trees that produced cones needed to be treated. The idea was to kill cones which emerged from bud break first without injuring mature foliage or still-closed foliage buds. In all of our studies, we assessed the percentage of cones killed out of the total cones on a tree as well as rating any injury to the buds, branches, and foliage of treated trees.

In our search for a treatment that would kill all emerging cones, we tested more than 20 different products. We tried labeled Christmas tree herbicides, apple-thinning agents, PGR's, and virtually any product we thought might burn tender, new cones. We added insecticidal oils that burned foliage and tobacco disbudding agents

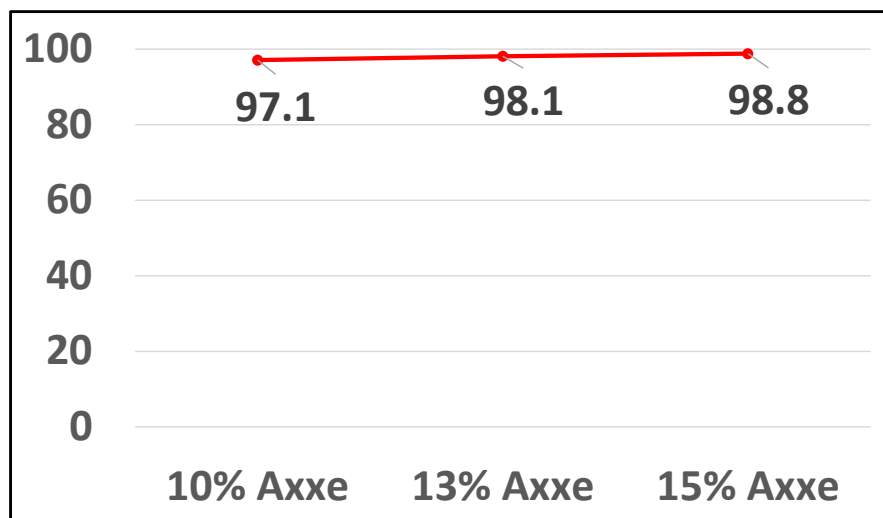


Figure 2. Percent of cones killed using labelled rates of Axxe herbicide (Cartners, 2019)

to the list of treatments. A promising product early on was Pre-Vam, an experimental citrus oil insecticidal soap. Another product that sometimes worked was Off-Shoot T, a Tobacco disbudding agent made from a fatty acid. Then we found two organic herbicides, Axxe and Scythe, in the same fatty acid / alcohol family of chemicals. We have since focused on them, with far better results.

Initially, all products were tested using manual Solo backpack sprayers fitted with wand extensions. Fatty acid products, particularly Axxe, yielded excellent cone kill if thoroughly applied under optimum conditions. Over several years, backpack sprayers were tested against backpack mistblowers, cannon mistblowers, and high-pressure hose sprayers. Ultimately, the best control occurred using high pressure hose sprayers. Repeatedly, mistblower sprayers were disappointing failures for this type of application.

A focus on fatty acid / alcohol herbicidal soaps

Labeled rates of Axxe from 10% to 15% were first tested using a back-

pack sprayer in 2015 and a high-pressure hose sprayer in 2016. The lowest labelled rate of Axxe killed almost as many cones as the highest rate. However, as we moved to test less-expensive, below-label rates in 2017, we failed to maintain thorough coverage. That miscalculation added 2 years to our project as we had to re-test treatments. Results from a 2019 study in 7- to 9-foot-tall trees using the same labelled rates of Axxe (10 to 15%) are shown in Figure 2. Nearly equal control from the lowest rate was a clear indicator that even lower rates would be effective.

In 2020, rates as low as 4% Axxe and 3% Scythe were tested, shown in Figure 3. While results with 4% Axxe were quite variable, 6% and 8% treatments did well. In all three 2020 studies, 8% Axxe killed as many cones as the full 10% rate at each site. The 6% Axxe rate performed equally well in two studies, but in the third location, only 79% of cones were killed. At that mountaintop site, in very large 15 – 18-foot-tall trees, the 6% rate was not as effective as higher rates. Coverage could well have been a factor,

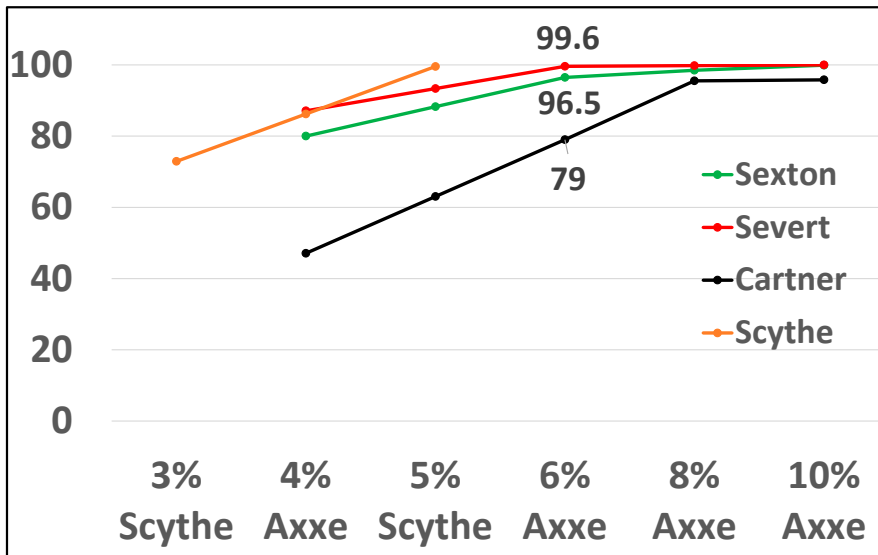


Figure 3. Percent of cones killed using below-label rates of Axxe and Scythe herbicides across 3 study locations in 2020

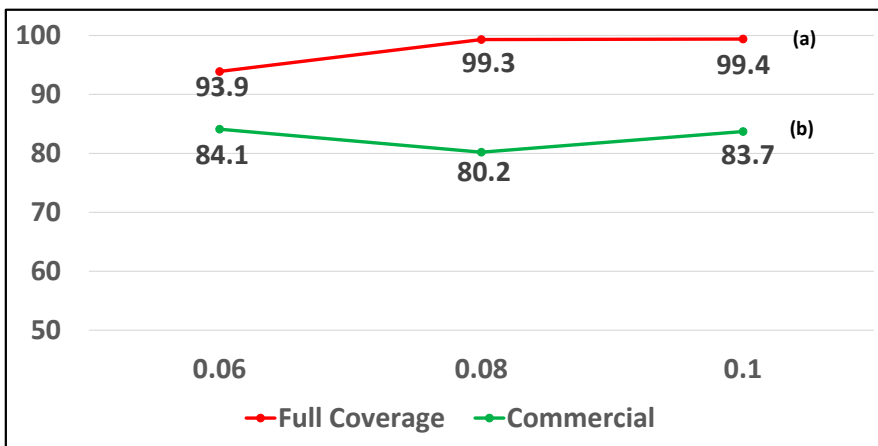


Figure 4. Percent of cones killed using low rates of Axxe applied at full coverage and commercial applications (Sexton's 2021)

there, under those mountaintop & tall tree conditions.

Scythe treatments were included in two of the 2020 studies. While the 5% rate of Scythe killed nearly 100% of cones, more damage to buds and foliage was observed from Scythe than any Axxe treatment. This pattern of significantly more Fraser fir injury with Scythe compared to Axxe applied at the same time has been consistent over the years across all sprayer types.

We looked more closely at spray coverage as measured by volume ap-

plied in the two 2021 cone control studies. Rates of 6%, 8%, and 10% Axxe were applied at a very thorough coverage and repeated using a more efficient, commercial style of application. The results from the Ashe County study are shown in Figure 4. As in 2020, 8% and 10% rates of Axxe provided nearly 100% control. A 6% rate with full coverage provided 94% control. Cone kill increased to over 96% when we excluded the one partially sprayed tree from the data. Commercial applications killed 80 to 84% of cones.

There was no statistically significant rate effect among full coverage treatments, nor among the commercial treatments. However, full coverage and commercial applications were significantly different from each other with consistently better cone control with thorough coverage.

So, what does full coverage look like compared to a commercial application? The 8- to 10-foot-tall trees in the Ashe County study required three or four spray positions, uniformly spaced around a tree. Commercial coverage represented two or three spray positions and less time spraying per position. Wider, fuller trees required the extra spray position for each application style compared to thinner or more open neighboring trees. A narrow, light-density tree might only require 2 spray positions even for full spray coverage. A “broken” spray pattern from the nozzle with moderate scatter was most effective. A less effective, narrower stream was needed to reach cones on taller trees.

We collected residual tank mix after each treatment to estimate the amount of material applied across ten trees per treatment. Results are shown in Figure 5. Ounces applied per tree for full coverage were almost three times that applied using commercial coverage techniques. Brad had a tendency to apply more spray volume for lower rates which may have boosted coverage. The high volume, full coverage treatments killed the most cones, but it is noteworthy that the much lower volumes of the commercial applications still killed better than 80% of cones.

This suggests that an experienced pesticide applicator should use a spray mix volume somewhere

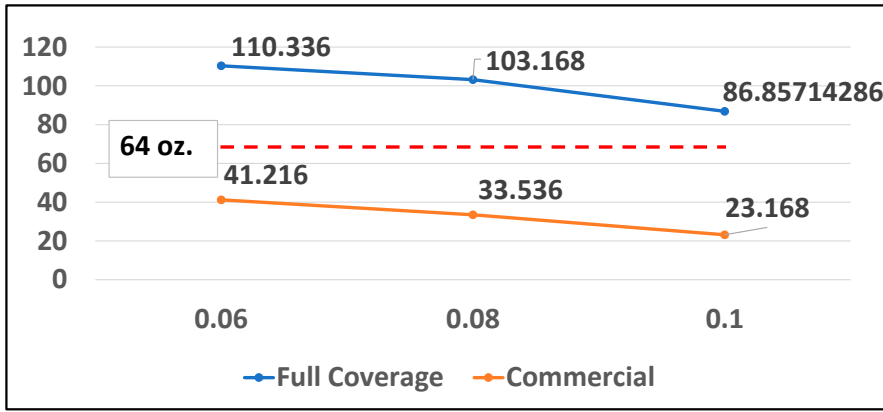


Figure 5. Ounces of spray mix applied to ten trees for each rate and application technique (Sexton's, 2021)

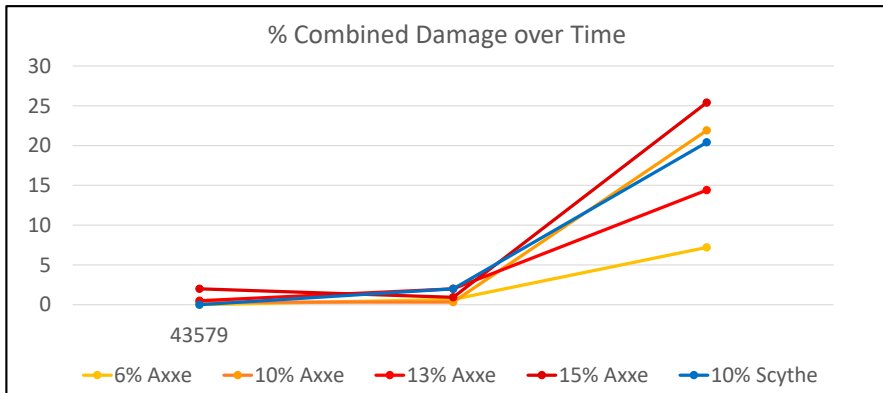


Figure 6. Fraser fir herbicide injury incurred from three treatment timings across spring cone emergence (Sexton's 2019)

between our full and commercial volumes. Half a gallon (64 oz.) per eight-foot tree might serve as a realistic target. Not every tree is wide, heavy-density, or loaded with cones. If an applicator understands the principles associated with full coverage and can translate that to the number of spray positions needed per tree, treatment can be optimized. A good applicator can adjust time per tree as needed and keep on moving.

We have identified safe rates of Axxe to kill cones without injuring trees, but timing is crucial. Treat too late and severe tree injury will occur. Treat too early and not all cones are completely emerged, diminishing control. Treatment timing was clearly demonstrated in a 2019 study in

large, abandoned trees. Treatments were made on April 24, May 1, and May 8, 2019. The best cone kill occurred on April 24 on young, fully emerged cones but was still very good a week later on May 1. Cone control was poor by May 8 when cones had matured to larger diameters, thicker scales, and more woody composition.

As cone kill declined over the three-week interval, tree injury increased. Combined tree injury (bud abortion, shoot stunting, and/or foliage burn) is shown in Figure 6. Almost no injury was observed on April 24 or May 1. Extensive injury to new growth was observed after May 8 treatments. Emerged shoots, buds showing any green, and even buds in the white-bud-scale stage

were injured. As buds swelled, the waxy coating on expanding bud scales no longer protected tender shoots inside. If growers use Axxe to prune emerging cones, they must be able to recognize threshold stages of bud break to know when to stop treatment.

A cost-effective treatment recommendation

The goal of this research was to find a treatment that is less expensive than hand-pulling cones. A cost comparison of Axxe and Scythe applications to hand-pulling cones is presented in Figure 7. I estimated that hand-pulling cones from an average 7–8-foot tree might cost \$1.25 (5 minutes per tree, 12 trees per hour, \$15 per hour total labor). The cost of any cone treatment per acre will go up with the number of trees with cones in a field. Hand-pulling cones is expensive, but at \$56 per gallon, so is Axxe. It wasn't until the rate dropped to 6% Axxe that spraying was less expensive than hand-pulling cones. If you keep good records on time spent pulling cones, you might find a different break point on cost.

Finally, we have a cost-effective treatment that we can recommend. Where an applicator can expect to achieve thorough coverage, use a rate of 6% Axxe. Where complete coverage is less likely or when ideal spray conditions are absent, a stronger 8% or 10% rate will provide a higher percentage of cone kill. Rate adjustments might need to occur in trees over 12 feet and for mildly windy conditions. All pesticide application should be abandoned on the days when moderate to high winds hamper directed spray.

Practice adoption, climate change, and final thoughts

Providing a recommendation to control cones with Axxe doesn't mean it will be adopted. I have already heard reasons why growers won't follow through: "The window to treat cones competes with Balsam Twig Aphid (BTA) treatment." "I don't care if hand-pulling cones is more expensive, I need to keep my crew busy in late May and June." Or simply, "My customers don't care if trees have cones, I don't pull them anyway." Also, many growers don't have widespread problems with cones or don't grow out their trees to the older ages that make them more prone to cone production in North Carolina.

I would argue that many customers do care about "trash" [from cones] in their trees, that workers could be better employed in more worthy practices if released from the need to pull cones, that BTA treatments should be made before cones emerge, and that cones are hormonal sinks that reduce bud set and foliage density in the tops of trees whether you sell or keep them. I could even add that dead cones won't feed or harbor aphids.

While stress-related cones on go-to-market and younger trees are not as much of an issue in NC as in other States, the problem could become more prevalent. The Southern Appalachians are a region in North America most protected by extensive forests and least impacted by climate change. That is likely to change. Already, there are high incidences of stress-related cones occurring on young Fraser firs grown in nearby states with hotter, dryer summers. That knowledge should give NC Christmas tree growers pause. Alter-

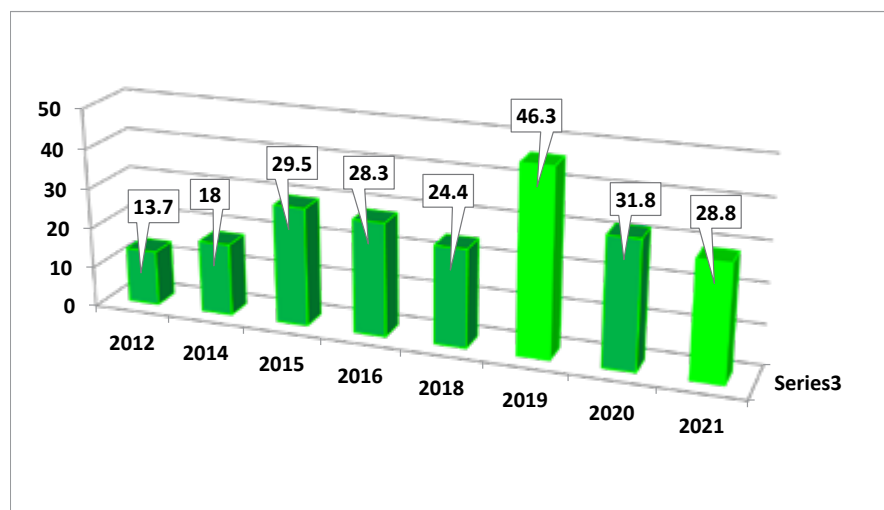


Figure 7. Cost comparison of spraying Axxe and Scythe to hand-pulling cones

natives to hand-pulling cones may become essential in the future.

I started this article with Brad and Jerry's friendly competition as way to emphasize the importance of spray coverage to cone control, but what we observed has broader implications. Spray coverage is critical to all pesticide applications made to Christmas trees. Spray coverage in other pesticide treatments is not as easy to assess when dead and living cones are not available to reveal it. Gaps we can easily see with cone treatments likely occur across all pesticide applications to Christmas trees. As a farm manager, how will you encourage better application with more uniform spray coverage?

As we wind this project down, thanks are in order. Aside from teasing them about their competitive spirits, Brad and Jerry deserve sincere thanks for applying the majority of treatments over the years. With Travis Birdsell's help as well, I could always count on a site to work at in Avery, Alleghany, and Ashe Counties every year. Jim Hamilton and Paige Paterson helped locate and conduct studies in Watauga when-

ever asked. Christy Bredenkamp and Jeff Vance helped in Jackson and Mitchell Counties respectively. My Extension agents have been my brain trusts - by initiating ideas and challenging mine.

We injured several trees, but never killed a single one! Growers took risks hosting our cone studies, especially during recent shortages of trees. Once they agreed to cooperate, their "open door" was hard to close! We often returned to farms for years at a stretch. Special thanks go to the Sextons, Severts, Wishons, Dale Cornett, Ronnie Beam and the Cartners, and Wiley Gimlin to name our most frequent hosts. None of this research would have occurred without the financial support of both the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and the NC Christmas Tree Association. 🌲





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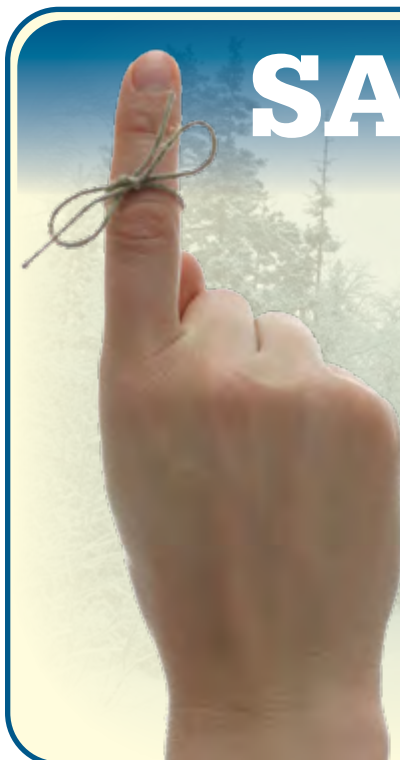


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- Workers’ compensation protects you as an employer as much as it protects your employees. It is designed to be an exclusive remedy for employees’ injuries on the job. In most states, it gives employers immunity from lawsuits in exchange for coverage of an employee’s medical cost, missing income, and other medical expenses.

Keep in mind payroll and class codes are not the only determining factors when it comes to premium. It’s a complicated formula with many other modifications, credits, and adjustments.

So, let’s go through an example together on calculating Manual Premium (Before these other modification and adjustments take place)

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Claim Amount	Claim Reflected As	Impact on Mod	Premium Cost Increase (Over 3 years)
\$22,265	\$22,265	+ 0.2882	\$41,501
\$7,934	\$7,934	+ 0.1344	\$19,354
\$1,527	\$1,527	+ 0.0259	\$3,730
_____	_____	_____	_____
\$31,726	\$31,726	+ 0.45	\$64,585

Now let’s look at what it would look like if this client had kept their claims to **Medical Only** instead of Indemnity. If they would have done so, they would have only experienced a \$19,354 increase and saved \$45,231 (\$64,585-\$19,354).

Claim Amount	Claim Reflected As	Impact on Mod	Premium Cost Increase (Over 3 years)
\$22,265	\$6,679.50	+ 0.0864	\$12,442
\$7,934	\$2,380.20	+ 0.0403	\$5,803
\$1,527	\$458.10	+ 0.0077	\$1,109
_____	_____	_____	_____
\$31,726	\$9,517.80	+ 0.13	\$19,354

Nathaniel Johnson, CLCS | Business Risk Consultant | njohnson@graniteinsurance.com | 828-212-4553

Cost Containment

Workers Compensation

This experience modification is designed to gauge both your past cost of claims and your projected chance that you will have an employee injury. This modification uses the prior 3 full years of loss history/claims, excluding the immediate prior year, to come up with your experience mod. Since you must have 3 full years of coverage to calculate the modification you have to be in business for 3 full years before you will receive an experience mod. Some states also require that there be a minimum premium before you will receive one as well. In NC you must pay a minimum of \$5,000 a year to receive an experience mod on top of the 3 full years of coverage.

So, if we are talking in terms of 2021, the experience mod will be based off claims in 2019, 2018, & 2017 and if you pay \$5,000 or more in work comp premium per year, you will develop an experience mod.

The Two Claims Categories

There are several claim categories that injuries are placed in once a claim is filed. The two major categories are **Medical Payments** and **Indemnity Payments**. Medical payments are just that, the cost to go to the hospital, surgeries, and any other ancillary cost associated with addressing an injury. Indemnity payments is the money your workers compensation carrier pays to make sure your employee still receives an income while they can't work. It will also pay any temporary or permanent disability payments to the injured employee.

The big surprise here is if claims are kept to being medical only, meaning no time and wages are paid out, that claim gets a 70% discount!

Now this is where we learn how the experience mod calculation comes into play.

- A company just starting out will have an average experience mod which is represented as "1.0"
- A company that is **better than average**, meaning they have had little to no claims while also taking advantage of the 70% medical only discount is below 1.0, such as ".80".
- A company that is **above average** would represent a number that is something like "1.2". This company would have some work to do.

Now to calculate the premium due we take the manual premium that we discussed earlier and multiply it by your experience mod.

- If your Experience Mod is .8 and your Manual Premium is \$100,000
 - $\$100,000 \times .8 = \$80,000$
- If your Experience Mod is 1.2 and your Manual Premium is \$100,000
 - $\$100,000 \times 1.2 = \$120,000$

That makes a huge difference in savings on your workers compensation, doesn't it!?!?!?

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Cost Containment

Workers Compensation

I know this is a lot to take in so let's bring all of this full circle.

- If we can control cost over a 3-year term by keeping claims to Medical Only and not Indemnity, we must get the employees back to work so we can pay them out of our own pockets! This is where a return-to-work program comes into play.
- Getting them back to work quickly will keep the claim as medical only. In NC, you have seven days to get an injured employee back on the job before indemnity payments kick in.
- Medical only claims have a 70% discount.
- Your premium due at the beginning of the year is derived by multiplying your manual premium by your experience mod.

Return to work, the golden key

To get a return-to-work program in place, and keep those claims to medical only, you should have a doctors note ready to go that indicates your objectives of getting them back to work and pointed questions that will help accomplish that goal. Let's say you have an employee that is in the field and cuts his arm while he is sheering and needs stitches. This injured employee might not be able to carry Christmas trees, but they can help file papers, answer the phone, or perform some light cleaning. The point is to keep them working so they are not sitting at home, watching TV, and collecting a check from the insurance carrier which you will end up paying for over the course of 3 years. Paying the injured employee to do office work will be much cheaper than your increase in premium since the claim was not kept to medical only.

If you need any help, have additional questions, or would like a doctors note template, please contact us and we'll be happy to assist.



About the Author

Nathaniel Johnson is a Business Risk Consultant at Granite Insurance. He is a graduate of Appalachian State University. Growing up Nathaniel worked for his family's construction company and also helped family friends in the Christmas tree industry. Because of his prior experience working as a laborer, he understands the day-to-day problems Christmas Tree growers face and hopes to use his knowledge in insurance to reduce some of those burdens. An overall appreciation for the work these industries produce has developed his passion in serving these types of business owners. When not working, Nathaniel can be found spending time with his fiancé Olivia, fishing the various rivers and creeks in the mountains of North Carolina, hanging out with friends and family, or participating in any outdoor activity.

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Dude Dad and The Holderness Family to Spread the Real Christmas Tree Message



As a part of CTPB's 2021 campaign, the CTPB has secured a contract with Taylor Calmus, aka: Dude Dad; a top social media influencer. Dude Dad is known for his funny and irreverent take on parenting and everyday family life. His videos are viewed hundreds of thousands of times — some exceed a million views! His social media following is massive — with more than 3.5 million followers on Facebook, 800,000 plus on TikTok and more than 400,000 YouTube subscribers. Not to mention his television show “Super Dad” that is currently streaming on Discovery+ and will make its cable debut on the Magnolia Network in January.

Best of all, he is a real Christmas tree fan, so agreeing to work with the CTPB was an easy “yes” for Taylor. In addition to providing what promises to be an entertaining look at real Christmas trees on his social channels, Taylor will be serving as a spokesperson in our annual satellite media tour. He will join an industry representative and participate in up to 30 live interviews with local media outlets across the US.

And in case you need even more Christmas spirit, The Holderness Family is also on board! Penn and Kim Holderness are practically royalty in the family-humor influencer realm. They will be creating a video specifically for the *It's Christmas. Keep it Real* campaign and sharing it on their YouTube, Facebook and Instagram channels.

In 2013, Penn and Kim hit publish on “XMAS Jammies” — a seemingly innocent video Christmas Card intended for their immediate family. Overnight, their video went viral on YouTube and they've been making goofy videos with their family ever since. Seven years later, their videos have resulted in over a billion views and 4.5 million followers across social media. Their family also continues to be one of the most sought-after content creators for family brands. 🌲



Not familiar with Dude Dad and The Holderness Family?

Check them out here:

HOLDERNESS FAMILY

<https://www.youtube.com/c/theholdernessfamily/featured>

DUDE DAD

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DudeDad>

Launch of Online Research Library

The Christmas Tree Promotion Board is happy to announce the launch of our Research Library on the CTPB website, christmastreepromotionboard.org. Producers can view the data and results of completed Christmas tree research projects funded by the CTPB, by clicking on the library tab, on the home page of the CTPB website. This library contains only completed project reports. With the short period of time that the CTPB has been funding research there are currently a limited number of reports, but this should expand quickly as previously funded projects are completed.

The Research Library is designed to be easily searchable, by growing region, subject matter, investigator and institution, tree species, and year funded and published. Each research project is also visible on the Research Library webpage as a “tile”. The tile exhibits the project title, investigator name and a picture representing the project. By clicking on the tile, the viewer can read a short summary of the project. To examine the methodology, full data set, and results of the research, click on the link to download the Final Report. There are also clickable links on each tile to reach Extension, or other open access publications resulting from this research.

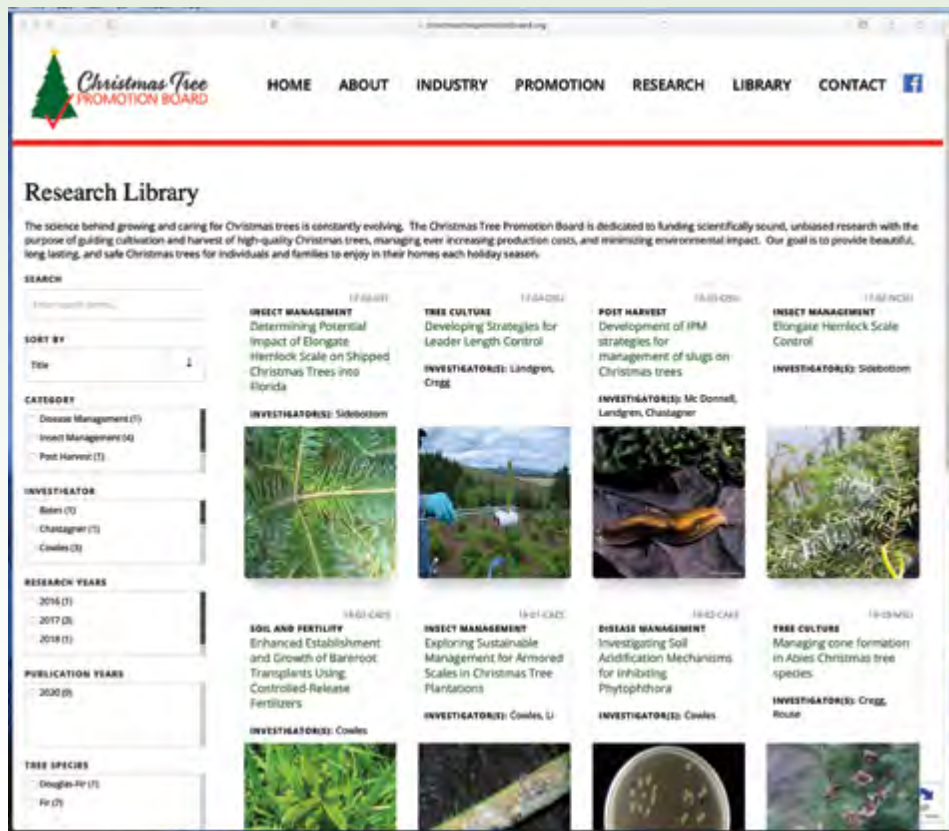


Figure 1. A Screenshot of the CTPB Research Library.

“It is very gratifying to see the Research Library come to fruition”, commented Research Chairman, Mark Schmidlin. “This is a great tool for the industry.”

Our vision for the CTPB Research Library is to not only provide an easily accessed avenue to learn about research projects funded by the CTPB, but to also become a central location for links to Christmas tree research on a broader scale. A resource for growers to quickly and easily find scientifically based information to produce Christmas trees.

The Christmas Tree Promotion Board (CTPB) is the national research and promotion program whose mission is to share the benefits of fresh Christmas trees with consumers through promotion, public relations, and education, while engaging in research to better serve our customers and growers. 🌲

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The Importance of Tractor Roll Over Protection Systems (ROPS)

Tractors are common to all farm operations. They also are the major cause of death in agriculture today. Tractors are linked to more than half of farm-related deaths, both nationally and in Iowa. The National Safety Council estimates more than 100 people were killed in 2004 while operating a tractor. About half those deaths were the result of a tractor rollover.

The high death rate associated with tractor rollovers is not a new problem. Since 1970, tractor rollover has been the leading cause of farm operator deaths, according to the National Safety Council.

Statistics from tractor rollover injuries show that about five people are killed per year for every 100,000 tractors in operation. The cumulative death toll from tractor rollovers since the development of the tractor is staggering.

What is ROPS?

ROPS, or rollover protective structure, is a cab or frame that provides a safe environment for the tractor operator in the event of a rollover. Also called anti-roll bars or ROPS cabs, all are designed to prevent death and minimize injury.

However, the first ROPS device was not marketed on new tractors until 1965. Many old tractors used today do not have ROPS.

The ROPS frame must pass a series of static or dynamic crush tests. These tests examine the ability of the ROPS to withstand various loads to see if the protective zone around the operator station remains intact in an overturn. The tests are extensive and destroy the rollover protective structure.

A homemade bar attached to the tractor axle, or simple sunshades, cannot protect the operator if the tractor overturns. **Farm operators should not add their own rollover protection devices to tractors manufactured without ROPS.** Without proper de-

sign and testing, homemade devices offer a false sense of security that can be more dangerous than operating a tractor without ROPS. The Society of Automotive Engineers and the American Society of Agricultural Engineers have standards on the design of rollover protective structures.

Use seat belts with ROPS

ROPS affords some safety during tractor overturns, but operators need more protection. **All operators of tractors equipped with ROPS must wear seat belts.** Without a seat belt, the operator will not be confined to the protective zone created by the ROPS.

During an overturn, the operator of a tractor with ROPS could be thrown from the protected area and crushed by the tractor, or even the rollover protective structure itself, if the operator is not wearing a seat belt.

Never use seat belts on a tractor without ROPS. In this case, the operator has no chance of survival because the seat belt will keep the operator in the seat as the tractor rolls over and crushes the operator. It is not certain whether the operator would be thrown clear from the tractor if seat belts were not worn, but that remains the operator's only chance of survival.

Reduce your rollover risks

There are several ways to reduce the possibility of tractor rollovers. However, these safety practices are not a substitute for ROPS. Follow these tips, and use seat belts on tractors equipped with ROPS, to keep operators safe.

- **Avoid sharp turns and reduce speed when turning.** A tractor has a high center of gravity and can tip. Compare the shape of a tractor and a race car—race cars can turn at high speeds because they are low to the road; a tractor cannot turn

quickly without overturning because it sits high above the road.

- **Avoid driving on steep embankments, near ditches, and around holes.** These areas are prone to rollovers. The ground can give way, the tractor will lose support and roll over. When conditions require operation on steep slopes, always head down slopes and travel backwards up slopes. This will place the tractor in a more stable position and reduce rollover risks.
- **Hitch only to a drawbar.** Many injuries occur when loads are hitched to the axle housing or other parts of the tractor. If you have a three-point hitch on your tractor, use it only with implements designed for a three-point hitch. If you attach implements to something higher than a drawbar, you can cause the tractor to roll over.

New equipment with ROPS

In 1985, tractor manufacturers adopted a voluntary standard to sell all tractors with ROPS in place. All new tractors are equipped at the factory with ROPS. The ROPS may be part of the cab structure and may not be visible, but the protection will be there.

Tractors made more than 40 years ago without advances in safety technology are operational today. It is estimated that less than one-third of the 4.4 million tractors used for agricultural purposes have ROPS. Older tractors often are used in situations typically associated with tractor rollover injuries, such as mowing the road ditch area, using a front-end loader, and hauling fallen trees.

Retrofit older tractors

Older tractors can be retrofitted with rollover protective structures. Check with your local dealer or Extension office. Extension staff have access to a book compiled by the National Farm Medicine Center in Wisconsin that lists manufacturers, models, and approximate costs of obtaining retrofit ROPS for tractors. Retrofitting can pose a difficult decision because its cost for an older tractor can exceed the machine's actual value. However, the true cost is in the lives that could be saved. 🌲

First Benefits Insurance Mutual's Loss Control Department is always ready to assist our policyholders with their safety efforts. For further information or assistance, contact us at losscontrol@firstbenefits.org.

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August 6-7, 2021, the NCCTA held its annual Summer Meeting.

This meeting was extra special, as we hosted the National Christmas Tree Association Tree & Wreath Contests and invited Christmas tree growers and friends from across the nation. Attendees enjoyed speakers, vendors, networking sessions, and the NCCTA & NCTA tree & wreath contests at Shatley Farms. Guests were treated to an extraordinary social event at Frosty's Choose and Cut that will be talked about for a very long time. Attendees also had their choice of three farm tours that each highlighted various North Carolina Christmas tree farms.

2021 NCCTA Summer Meeting Sponsors

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Christmas Trees

Another special highlight of the meeting was Legacy Lane, which consisted

of four special sponsorships recognizing industry growers, past and present, who have left an industry legacy or will pass one on. Be sure to read about those honored by their families on pages 42 through 45. These generous sponsorship contributions will help to promote North Carolina Fraser fir as well as preserve the family legacies that have supported and contributed so much to the North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry.



BARR LEGACY

Wilson Barr
Barr Evergreens
of North Carolina, LLC



We are so happy to have the opportunity to recognize Wilson Barr, and his involvement and contributions to the Christmas tree industry. While still in high school he began shearing a 'patch' of white pine trees that the local North Carolina extension agent suggested might be good for selling as Christmas trees, which was a very novel idea at the time. That little patch was so successful that he decided he would plant a few more, and a few more, and a few more...and now 61 years later, he is still working this Christmas tree idea!

During the years in between, he and Linda raised two wonderful sons and three beautiful grandchildren. They would take family vacations to the National Christmas Tree Association meetings where he would meet new people, learn new things and hone his tree growing & marketing skills. He opened a retail tree lot in Wilmington, NC in 1978 that is still operating today. Through this venture he has touched countless families who come back year after year looking for Mr. Wilson and their family Christmas tree.

He grew up in a family business that was very civic minded and understood that things are better when we all work together with a common goal. He has been involved with the Ashe County Christmas Tree Association, North Carolina Christmas Tree Association and is currently North Carolina's Director for the National Christmas Tree Association.

BEUTELL LEGACY

Thomas and Joan Beutell
Wolf Creek Tree Farm
& Nursery, Inc.



Most everyone in the Christmas tree industry have at some point heard of Tommy and Joan Beutell. They own and operate Wolf Creek Tree Farm in Tuckasegee, North Carolina, and have been in the business of growing trees since the late 40s. Tommy is from the Atlanta area of Georgia and Joan was born and raised near Roan Mountain, NC. Roan Mountain is the location of one of the famous native Fraser Fir stands in NC. It is also the area where Tommy and Joan first met. They married in 1957 and continued experimenting with planting Fraser Fir for Christmas trees. This new industry started to eventually take hold in the northern mountainous areas of NC thanks to a few bold opportunists that had a vision of growing Christmas trees as a row crop.

Tommy and Joan operate two farms that make up Wolf Creek Tree Farm. The larger farm is located in Tuckasegee. This is the farm where Tommy and Joan have lived since the mid-50s and where they began their life long journey of growing Christmas Trees and raising a family. The other location is in Bakersville, North Carolina, where one third of



the production is located.

Two children were brought into the family and both followed suit and stayed on the family farm. The older child, Thomas, passed away in 2009 and presently, Renee' plays an active role in the business. Several grandchildren have also become involved with the family farm and are interested in continuing the farming legacy as well.

Tommy and Joan have long supported the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association (NCCTA) and the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA). Tommy served as president of NCCTA in the early 60s and served on the board of directors for NCCTA on and off for 30

years. He has always been a straight shooter and people in the industry have respected him for that. Joan used to operate the seedling production at Wolf Creek and for years her plants were prized and sought after in the industry. Joan and her crew grew some of the best plants available in NC.

Today Tommy and Joan are slowing down some on the farm but Tommy still continues to make at least weekly visits to the fields and crew to oversee operations. As he often says, "There is something extremely satisfying in seeing a crop grow." Joan is enjoying her gardening, playing in her greenhouse, and spoiling her great grandchildren.

CARTNER LEGACY

Cartner's

Sam and Margaret Cartner were dedicated to contributing to their church, family and community, particularly small family farmers.

Raised on a farm in Davie County, North Carolina, Sam developed a true love for the land that continued his whole life. After serving in WW II, his interest and education in agriculture led him to a career as an agricultural extension agent. It was fortuitous in several ways, as in doing so, he met his life partner, Margaret, a Home Demonstration teacher.

In 1952 Sam and Margaret moved to Avery County, NC where he served as extension agent for 21 years. During that time, he served as the president of the N.C. Association of Agricultural Extension Agents.

In 1955, Sam was one of the leaders to establish the North Carolina Christmas Tree Growers Cooperative Inc. now known as the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association (NCCTA). That same year he and several partners established one of the first Christmas tree plantations in Western North Carolina.

Sam was a crusader for the entire "Real Tree" industry, recognizing that the Fraser fir could provide small family farmers with a productive and profitable cash crop. He served as the first chairman of the NCCTA Fraser Fir Promotional committee.

Sam and Margaret started Cartner Christmas Tree Farm in the 1950s converting from cattle to trees. The farm currently consists of more than 500 acres offering wholesale and choose and cut trees. While both Sam and Margaret shied away from the limelight preferring to focus on collaborative efforts and work behind the scenes, their achievements have not been overlooked.

Sam and Margaret were chosen as the Avery County Farm Family of the year in 1999. In 2002, Sam was inducted into the Western North Carolina Agricultural Hall of Fame. They were awarded the NCCTA's Outstanding Service Award in 2006. In 2006 Sam was recognized by the National Christmas Tree Association with its Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2012 as Avery County Citizen of the Century.

Sam and Margaret Cartner Cartner Christmas Tree Farm

Margaret passed away in 2008 and Sam in 2017. Both would have wanted us to thank all the wonderful people in their lives especially the farm workers and farm manager Ronnie Beam.

David, Jim and Sam Cartner strive hard to operate the Cartner Christmas Tree Farm according to the high standards set by their parents.



SEXTON LEGACY

Byron Sexton
Ken and Joann Sexton
Sexton Farms



Byron Sexton, considered a pioneer in the Fraser fir Christmas Tree Industry, was known for his creative thoughts and eccentric ideas. In 1960, after observing trees in the wild being cut and taken home by families to be used as fresh, aromatic Christmas trees, he decided to take a chance on setting Fraser fir in hopes that a new market could be developed to underwrite a sustainable business.

The story goes...when Byron approached a local agriculture extension agent regarding his idea to set out Fraser fir Christmas trees, the agency recommended that Byron try "one acre" just to see how it would go. Byron informed them that he had already set eighty acres and was taking a chance that the Fraser fir just might have a bright future! He was making his living as a tobacco farmer while he took this chance on his new venture growing Fraser fir.

Byron needed a partner to help with business expenses and who is better than your own son? The rest is history as his son Ken and wife Joann joined him to cre-

ate Sexton Tree Farm. Joann, a hard worker and devoted mother, also worked as the main bookkeeper, while Ken worked diligently to grow the farm. Seeing an industry need, Joann brought the Howey distributorship to the mountains of NC and VA to provide balers and elevators for farmers throughout the region. One of Ken's major legacies was his great desire to promote our native Fraser fir Christmas trees. He worked tirelessly with other farmers to develop the NCCTA Fraser Fir Promotional Committee. Sons Greg and Jimbo, along with Greg's wife Robin, joined Ken and Joann and continued to grow the family business. Then, Greg and Robin's sons, Andrew, Matthew and Thomas, established Frosty's Choose and Cut in 2002, a whole forty-two years after their great grandfather Byron set his first trees! That's four generations and more than sixty years of family owned and operated farms stewarded by the Sextons in the ideal growing climate of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains.





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

LEGACY LANE



Cartner's





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

EXHIBITORS & SPONSORS





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

SOCIAL AT FROSTY'S

The dinner and social event at Frosty's Choose & Cut will be one that is remembered for a very long time. There were awards, spirits, good food, a great band to dance to, beautiful views, and an all-around great time with old and new friends. Special thanks to the Sexton family for hosting the event and for creating such a wonderful memory for everyone.





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

SOCIAL AT FROSTY'S





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 1



This tour visited **Bottomley Evergreens** headquarters and greenery manufacturing facility, the largest operation of its kind in NC, where attendees toured a large cold storage unit, and manufacturing and shipping facilities, and state-of-the-art labor housing.



A wholesale Christmas tree and pumpkin farm operated by **Wishon Evergreens** is a wholesale Christmas tree and pumpkin farm with one of the first installations of permanent deer fencing on an NC Christmas tree farm, a Christmas tree loading yard designed for efficient movement of tractor trailers, a demonstration of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) used to inventory Christmas trees, and pumpkins grown as an alternative crop.





Christmas Tree
Association

NCCTA 2021

Summer Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 1



The **NCTA&CS Upper Mountain Research Station** produces the greatest concentration of Christmas tree research at one location on the East Coast. Tour participants were educated on Fraser fir progeny tests, the next generation Fraser fir seed orchard, glyphosate (Roundup) resistant weed control research, Fraser fir substrate and container seedling research, and a demonstration of an agricultural spray drone.



At **Mistletoe Meadows**, provider of the 2007 White House Christmas tree, participants were given a tour by owner, Joe Freeman, who talked about his wholesale and choose & cut farm where Fraser fir production can be seen from sown seed to wholesale shipment.





NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 2



The tour began at **Frosty's Choose & Cut**, one of the largest choose & cut farms in NC, owned and operated by brothers who are fourth generation Christmas tree growers, where tour participants learned about their fall pumpkin festival and winter Christmas tree sales. Just one part of a larger wholesale operation, Greg Sexton explained the vital and important role that direct marketing plays in their operation.



Next stop was **Appalachian Christmas Mountain Farms**, a 100+ acre wholesale Fraser fir farm that has recently added choose & cut to the farm's operations. With plenty of scenic views, it is located in Watauga County on the Eastern Continental Divide, with a prime location just off the main highway, this farm is set perfectly for choose & cut traffic, but the farmers continue to face changing land and climate conditions.



At **Circle C Choose & Cut Farm**, a family farm covering 30+ acres, with a 150 year-old restored farmhouse and a newly restored barn that serves as a wedding and event venue. Owned and operated by Dennis Cook and Jim Henson, it is inside the Boone city limits. They are a linchpin of the local choose & cut promotional effort that has created "Choose & Cut Season" between "Leaf" and "Ski" seasons for the booming local tourism industry. Tour participants heard their story and the grower collaboration they have with the tourism industry.



Christmas Tree
Association

NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 2



The tour then traveled to Avery County to visit **Avery Farms**, a 200 year-old farm featuring a variety of U-pick crops. Waightstill Avery has been an industry innovator for a generation and has diversified across multiple crops and different market niches. Guests heard just a few of Waightstill's stories and his family history, and they left wanting more. Guests also learned about the innovation of the mail order Christmas tree market. Guests were treated to a good ole fashioned pig pickin'cooked by Mr. Avery himself.



The tour concluded at **NC Forest Service Linville River Nursery** Fraser fir container seedling nursery in Crossnore, that has supplied Fraser fir seedlings to NC growers since 1970 — as bare root seedlings for most of its history, but more recently as container-grown plugs. Recently, local growers and the NCCTA rallied together to save this important industry resource. Guests toured the seedling production greenhouse and learned about their tree improvement program.



NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 3

This tour highlighted several farms representing the greatest concentration of Christmas tree farms in any county east of the Rocky Mountains. The first stop was at **Peak Farms** loading yard owned and operated by Rusty and Beau Estes, suppliers of the 2008 White House Christmas Tree. At **Peak Farms**, featured topics included Christmas tree fields from which a national contest winner was harvested, a large wholesale loading yard, a glyphosate resistant weed herbicide trial, and a demonstration of unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) inventory management.



The next stop was at the largest Christmas tree container seedling and transplant nursery in NC, **Barr Evergreens** nursery operated by Rusty Barr. **Barr Evergreens** nursery presented a diverse array of container crops and best management practices. They currently produce some of NC's finest Christmas tree seedlings and transplants for sale to the public. Participants viewed media mixing, container filling, seedling and transplant production, and ornamental nursery production all in one compact facility.



NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

FARM TOUR 3



The last stop, **Hart-T Tree Farm**, is both a wholesale Christmas tree farm and retail lot operation that continues to diversify. This tour traversed scenic roads winding through the New River Valley. **Hart-T Tree Farms** has repeatedly broken the bounds with fresh ideas and new markets. Tour participants got to see their new choose & cut event center, their “Little Saps” online seedling gift enterprise, and Christmas tree fields that reach the horizon. Topics of discussion included leadership development, dealing with the Department of Labor, controlling cones on Fraser fir Christmas trees, a different weed management study, and the consequences of phytophthora root rot.

One of the BEST in Memory!

It was wonderful to see people we hadn't seen in a long time; getting together to celebrate our accomplishments and witness our struggles over the past couple of years. The meeting would not have been possible without our sponsors, our volunteers, our exhibitors and our attendees. A special thank you to all those who undertook this great project including everyone who contributed their time, work, resources, equipment, monetary donations, farms, warehouses, and hospitality. Many thanks to our meeting venue host, Shatley Farms, our social event host, Frosty's Choose and Cut, and our many farm tour hosts. Thanks also to the NCTA members and out-of-state guests who joined us and made it extra special. You are all stars and made the 2021 Summer Meeting one of the best in memory!



NCCTA 2021 Summer Meeting HIGHLIGHTS

SPEAKERS



Alexander M. "Sandy" Stewart, PhD

*Assistant Commissioner of Agricultural Services
at North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*



Andrew Bosserman

Bosserman CPA, PLLC



Dr. Justyna Jeziorska

*Research Associate, Center for Geospatial Analytics,
North Carolina State University*



Andrew Howell

*Graduate Research Assistant, Aquatic and Noncropland Weed Science,
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, North Carolina State University*



Tim O'Connor

Executive Director, National Christmas Tree Association



Jeff Owen

*Area Extension Forestry Specialist,
North Carolina State University*



Blake Brown

*Hugh C. Kiger Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics,
North Carolina State University*



Marsha Gray

Executive Director, Christmas Tree Promotion Board



Nathan Huff

Phelps Dunbar



Brandon Davis

Phelps Dunbar



Rick Dungey

CSF Executive Director



Dr. Justin Whitehill

*Assistant Professor, Christmas Tree Genetics Program,
North Carolina State University*



NCCTA 2021

Summer Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS

EXHIBITORS

Advisor HR Insurance Services Inc.

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Matt Monroe, Stephanie Bittner
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Huntersville, NC 28078
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mrumfelt@advisorhrinsurance.net
advisorhrinsurance.net

Appalachian Farms

Cale Smith, Matthew Horney
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Elk Park, NC 28622
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matthew@app-farms.com

Ashe Chamber of Commerce

NO BOOTH

Kitty Honeycutt
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Ashe County Christmas Tree Association

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Barr Evergreens

Bill Beckman, Zak May and Durwin Cox
PO Box 3, Crumpler, NC 28617
(336) 982-3013 or (336) 982-2017
rusty@barrevergrees.com
barrevergrees.com

Bosch's Countryview Nursery, Inc.

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Brian and Cimberly Bosch
10785 Allendale, MI 49401
(919) 892-4090
brian@boschsnursery.com
boschsnursery.com

Carolina Farm Credit

Vickie Young, Stacey Barker,
Spencer Blevins, Judd Price
146 Victory Lane, Statesville, NC 28625
PO Box 1827, Statesville, NC 28687
(800) 521-9952
marketing@carolinafarmcredit.com
carolinafarmcredit.com

Cartner's Blue Ridge Fraser Firs of North Carolina

David W., Jim P., and Sam C. Cartner
7 Orchard Street, Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 733-1641
cartner@carolinafraserfir.com
carolinafraserfir.com



NCCTA 2021

Summer Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS

EXHIBITORS

Cherokee Manufacturing

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(828) 292-2556
art@cherokeemfg.com
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Christmas Spirit Foundation Trees for Troops

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2650 S. Hanley Road, Suite 100
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Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia

Brittany Frenette and Jay Woodworth
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outreach@ctcns.com
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Cornerstone Detention Products Inc.

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Dayton Bag & Burlap

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Statesville, NC 28625
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Evergreen Creations LLC

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Fraser Knoll, LLC

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EXHIBITORS

Granite Insurance Agency

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graniteinsurance.com

Greenscape Tools, Inc.

Amber Scott, Becca Cheek
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(336) 877-2672
info@greenscapetools.com
greenscapetools.com

H&H Farm Machine Company

Chad Harms
7916 Unionville Brief Road, Monroe, NC 28110
(704) 753-4919
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hhspray.com

Kelco Industries

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kelcomaine.com

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leepub.com

LifeStore Bank & Insurance

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Barker, Stephanie Trivett, Martin Little
PO Box 26, West Jefferson, NC 28694
(336) 246-4344
jcurrent@golifestore.com
golifestore.com

Linville River Nursery

Anna Hollifield, Jim Slye or Chris Daniel
NC Forest Service, 6321 Linville Falls Hwy
Newland, NC 28657
(828) 733-5236
anna.hollifield@ncagr.gov
buynctrees.com

Memory Lane Christmas Tree Farm

Harry and Juanita Peckham
4567 Marshall Road, Rantoul, KS 66079
(785) 878-3793
jharry@pleasantridge.com
pleasantridge.com



NCCTA 2021

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EXHIBITORS

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NO BOOTH

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ann@natureslightcandles.com
natureslightcandles.com

Nutrien Ag Solutions

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nutrien.com

Packaging Corporation of America

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Realty One Group Results

Chris Barr (owner), Beckie Savage, Dave Shirlin,
Mark Liddle, Taryne Seatz, Starr Kiser
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bsavagerealtor@gmail.com
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NCCTA 2021

Summer Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS

EXHIBITORS

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riverridgetreefarms.com

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southernag.com

Southern Forestry Products, Inc.

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southernforestryproducts.com

Sunbelt Rentals

Ted Randolph
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Winston-Salem, NC 27105
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pcm47@sunbeltrentals.com
sunbeltrentals.com

The Kirk Company

Gary Snyder, Rick Miller, Mike Jones, TJ Roland,
Matt Snyder and Ron McDonald
N 4080 State Road 22, Wautoma, WI 54982
(800) 252-5475
tjroland@kirkcompany.com
kirkcompany.com

Vans Pines Nursery

Evan and Gary Van Slooten
14731 Baldwin Street, West Olive, MI 49460
(616) 399-1620
info@vanspinesnursery.com
vanspinesnursery.com

Weyerhaeuser

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karen.temen@weyerhaeuser.com
weyerhaeuser.com/timberlands/seedling-sales/
western-seedlings/

Wildcat Advanced Land Clearing, LLC

Marnee and Cherrie Dvorak
4235 N Blackstock Road, Spartanburg, SC 29301
(864) 978-1892
info@walclearing.com
walclearing.com

CONGRATULATIONS!

WINNERS OF THE

2021 NCCTA Tree & Wreath Contests



FRASER FIR

Grand Champion

Tim Moser, Shepherd's Way

2nd Place

The Sextons, Sexton Tree Farm

3rd Place

Larry Smith, Mountain Top Fraser Fir



OTHER SPECIES

1st Place

**Amber & Alex Church,
Cline Church Nursery (Blue Spruce)**

2nd Place

**Rusty and Beau Estes, Peak Farms
(Norway Spruce)**

3rd Place

**Joe Freeman, Mistletoe Meadows
(White Pine)**

CONGRATULATIONS!

WINNERS OF THE

2021 NCCTA Tree & Wreath Contests



UNDECORATED WREATH

Grand Champion

Tim Moser, Shepherd's Way

2nd Place

Joe Freeman, Mistletoe Meadows

3rd Place

Larry Smith, Mountaintop Fraser Fir

DECORATED WREATH

1st Place

Tim Moser, Shepherd's Way

2nd Place

Joe Freeman, Mistletoe Meadows

3rd Place

Rusty and Beau Estes, Peak Farms

The annual NCCTA Tree & Wreath Contest was another highlight of the show. The contest was sponsored exclusively by County Farm Bureau Federation Boards including Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Jackson, Mitchell and Watauga Counties. Contest winners were presented checks courtesy of Farm Bureau Federation, and awards for their exemplary trees and wreaths.



Outstanding Contributor Award: Wilson Barr

The NCCTA honors folks that have spent their lives promoting Fraser Fir from North Carolina and I can tell you this gentleman has done a great job doing just that. Wilson's been growing trees since 1960, so you'll have to be a little better at math (than me) to figure out how old he is! Wilson was honored with a well-deserved legacy sponsorship at the NCCTA a summer meeting, and you can read about how he got his start in the Christmas tree business and his life legacy on page 42.

I'm so grateful that Wilson has instilled the desire in Rusty and his family to continue to carry on just what he did all his life and is still doing. In fact, he serves on the national board right now. He is very deserving of this award and has given so much to the Christmas tree industry throughout his life.

Presented By Cline Church



Lifetime Membership Award: Doug Clark

I've known Doug since 1975 and he's taught me a lot. He's has three wonderful kids, Dee, Missy, and Reed Clark, and eight grandkids and two great grandkids.

Doug started setting trees in the 60s and he was one of the first farmers, if not the first, to summer shear Fraser fir. In the 1970s, Fraser fir wasn't known nationally. Doug basically introduced the Fraser fir through trade shows to a lot of the country.

In 1977, after I graduated, Mr. Clark gave me my first 500 trees to set. In 1980, my best friend and I were clearing a piece of property on a farm of Doug's it was really steep with cattle on it. We were sitting down for lunch near the brush fire we had lit, and it got out of control before we knew it. The mountain had a lot of broom sage in it and caused the fire to shoot up the mountain and spread quickly. It burned that whole field and moved into some marketable trees. Now, you think there is a tree shortage currently, but back in 1980, Frasers had really taken off and you had to know somebody to be able to get them. I basically burnt up about 1,000 marketable trees, which

was a whole lot, even to a big grower then. I just knew that Mr. Clark was going to kill me, and even if I did survive, I would most likely get sued. Since this happened during the day, Mr. Clark was teaching school, so I had to go to the school to tell him what I had done. I was so scared and nervous. I'll never forget what he said to me - "Everybody makes mistakes, ya know, and we'll just move forward." I couldn't believe how forgiving and understanding he was. Since that day, I've tried to use that lesson and forgiving grace that he taught me that day in a lot of situations in my life.

Doug Clark is a very special friend of mine, along with his wife Jane. Every day that we worked, the meals were like a feast. By the way, Ms. Jane makes the best scalloped potatoes there are!

Presented by Larry Smith

Accepted by Doug's son, Dee Clark. —"I will accept this for dad; and due to poor health he can no longer get out of the house. On behalf of him, thank you very much."



Outstanding Contributor Award: Harry Yates

Harry Yates is a local giant of the Christmas Tree Industry. He's one of those guys that walked into this industry some years ago; he saw what he liked, he came in, and he stayed. Whether I've been at the state meetings, national meetings, county meetings; I've seen this gentleman present. If there was an issue facing this industry, we knew that Harry could be called upon to go educate himself, find the people with the information, and then disperse and share that information, serving as the solution to the situation for all of us.

Whether you transplanted your first transplants this last spring, displayed your sign for your choose and cut farm this past year, shipped 100 trailer loads across the country, or if you are the largest grower in this audience, we are deeply indebted to this gentleman. Harry's done the work that most of us were unwilling to do. He's also helped take and move the NC Fraser fir from an unknown species to one of the most preferred species in the Christmas Tree Industry today.

He has taken the term "We the People", from one of the most important documents in our history, and moved it into his daily life. His selflessness and his concern for his fellow man are concepts that make organizations like this, towns, communities and civilizations, prosper and flourish.

Harry was the National Director from North Carolina to the NCTA from 1999-2007. And he has served on the NCCTA Board for many years. He's served many roles as a member of the NCCTA: president, a founding member of the Fraser Fir Promotional Committee and a longstanding board advisor for over two decades. He chaired the 1998 National Christmas Tree Meeting, one of the most successful ever with 1400 attendees, in Asheville, NC. And in 2007, he testified before the House Agriculture Committee about the labor needs of American Agriculture. Harry has accomplished so many things for the Christmas Tree Industry that it would take me much too long to list them all. We are all deeply indebted.

Presented by Dale Cornett

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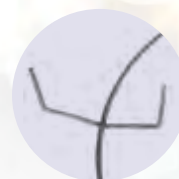
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Christmas Spirit Foundation Recognizes Four “SPIRIT AWARD” Recipients for 2021

By Elizabeth LeBrun

As the Trees for Troops program continues to grow, the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation (CSF) recognizes that the success of the program depends on the many people involved. Volunteers support the program in various

ways that include sourcing donations, coordinating volunteer efforts, raising funds, and creating awareness. In 2018, the CSF Trustees formalized their recognition of individuals/companies by creating the Christmas SPIRIT Award. This year we celebrate four recipients:

LEHIGHTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT **Lehighton, PA**



Lehighton High School National Honor Society accepts the Christmas Spirit Award and ring their Spirit Bell to symbolize the accomplishment. The LHS National Honor Society has been coordinating a drive at the high school to support Trees for Troops for many years.

The Lehighton Area School District decided to participate in the Trees for Troops program many years ago in order to support tree farms in their community. “One of our elementary school secretaries at the time had a husband who owned a local farm that had supported the Trees for Troops program, so I thought that it would be great community service exposure for the kids,” explains Aaron Sebelin, Principal at Lehighton Elementary Center. “Involvement gives our kids a sense of pride — not only in our school, but in the nation. We have a school kick-off Veterans Day program each year, which gets

the kids eager to talk to their parents and get them involved in these types of events.” The Lehighton Parent Teacher Organization is also a strong supporter of Trees for Troops. “Our elementary schools have participated in the Trees for Troops program for over 10 years. Each school raises money through various events such as a staff dress-down days, special student “spirit” days, and school-wide challenges such as penny wars and National Honor Society programs. The kids and staff have a lot of fun raising funds and are happy that all the money collected goes towards this outstanding program.”



Mr. Sebelin, Principal at the Lehighton Elementary Center, and students accept the Christmas Spirit Award from Jan Wentz, a CST Trustee. Each year, students from the Lehighton District all support Trees for Troops with school-wide dress downs and collections.



Mrs. Habas and the Lehighton Middle School Student Council accept the Christmas Spirit Award. The Student Council raises money every year to support Trees for Troops.

Dewey Romagnoli and Linda Haley accept the Christmas Spirit Award from Dick Darling, CSF Chair of Trustees, for their many years of tree contributions and community outreach efforts to promote donations and volunteer service benefitting Trees for Troops.



ROMAGNOLI'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM AT ONEIDA VALLEY ACRES

Dewey Romagnoli • Canastota, NY

Dewey Romagnoli first learned about the Trees for Troops program in 2007 through his membership in the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York. Little did he know, that fourteen years later, the Romagnoli's farm would be sending more than 600 trees to troops in 2020 as a designated FedEx donation station! Dewey has his routine down now, reaching out to current customers in October, posting donations

on their Facebook page and sending personal thank you notes. He finds it surprising that tree donations have increased so dramatically over the past two years, when trees supplies have been tight. "Last year, we left the donation goal at 450 instead of increasing it further, but the numbers just blew up! When people got ahold of the local news story and word of mouth, we ended up with over 600 trees donated." Dewey has a long list

of people to thank for making his efforts so successful: Linda Haley, for authoring donation letters; Martha Conway, who handles communications; Ellen Hauck, a military mom who tags trees and works with donating agencies; and Danielle Papelino, who coordinates volunteers with special needs. Dewey also credits local businesses, military families and the media for helping make his donation drive such a success.

MILLER PLUMBING AND HEATING

Warren Miller • Bethlehem, NH

Warren Miller has quietly and continually backed the Trees for Troops program for many years, after originally being asked for a contribution to help facilitate the initial program in its infancy many years ago. He explains that he enthusiastically responded to the appeal because he strongly feels that all military members and their families rightfully deserve such a program. "I have no personal military background, but my father was in the Army, and I really appreciate what they've all done and still do for us. It's obvious that military families sacrifice so much. The sacrifice

speaks for itself." Warren understands the importance of family, as he began working for his father in their plumbing and heating business in the small town of Bethlehem, New Hampshire back in 1962. He has since trained and brought his son, Bill, on board as a partner to work alongside him and serve the approximately 2,590 town residents. When asked what he imagines that the gift of an unexpected Christmas tree during the holiday season does for the military service members and their families, Warren says that he simply hopes that they feel appreciated.



Ed Matter, an associate of Warren Miller, poses with the Christmas Spirit Award presented to Mr. Miller for his many years of monetary support of the Trees for Troops program.



“SPIRIT AWARD” Recipients for 2021

PAMELA HELMSING

Warrenton, MO

Trees for Troops was created in 2005; the program was a synergy between NCTA, Fedex and the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation (CSF), a charitable giving arm of the NCTA that was created at that time to formalize the practice of growers donating trees to military families. The CSF was created by its first Executive Director, Pam Helmsing, along with initial CEO Steve Drake. Helmsing recalls that “at the time, *Cause Marketing* was becoming prominent. Consumers, particular younger consumers, were interested in purchasing goods from companies that supported communities, good causes and the environment.”

Pam explains that “Christmas tree growers have a long history of being generous, and that they are quick to lend a hand to those in need. The CSF was formed to grow and expand these good works and create a way for the real Christmas tree industry and its growers to ‘get caught doing good.’” When asked what receiving the CSF award means to her, Pam says that it is a reminder that she was part of creating a program that has brought many people together to bring joy and a sense of appreciation to more than 250,000 military families. “It’s a reminder to all of us that when we work together, we can accomplish great things.”



Pam Helmsing receives the Christmas Spirit Award for her work in starting the original program, and her continued efforts as a Trustee in building upon its annual successes and growth.

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Calendar of Events

January 18, 2022

NCCTA Leadership Retreat & Joint BOD/FFPC Meeting

Valle Crucis Conference Center

January 19, 2022

2022 Budget Committee meeting

Valle Crucis Conference Center
(Executive Committee Only)

February 24-25, 2022

NCCTA Winter Meeting

Boone United Methodist Church

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www.boschsnursery.com



Fraser Fir Transplants



Norway Spruce Transplants

FRASER FIR

Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate
(3-1, PL+1).....	8-14"	\$110.00	\$790.00
(2-2, PL+2).....	8-15"	\$135.00	\$950.00
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$155.00	\$1100.00

CANAAN FIR

Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate
(2-1, P+1).....	8-14"	\$115.00	\$840.00
(2-2, P+2).....	10-18"	\$145.00	\$1100.00
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$155.00	\$1200.00

For a complete list call or write us.



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