

GREAT LAKES

CHRISTMAS TREE JOURNAL



**Five Ways Trump's Next
Presidency Could
Impact Christmas Tree
Grower Taxes**

**Assessing Sites for
Christmas Tree
Production Using Web
Soil Survey**

**Implementing Somatic
Embryogenesis to
Create Higher Quality
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Cover photo – Ann Harmon from Starr Pines in Boonville, Missouri, creating a wreath.

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The Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal is a quarterly publication produced by the Michigan Christmas Tree Association. Published Winter/January 10, Spring/April 10, Summer/July 10, Fall/October 10.

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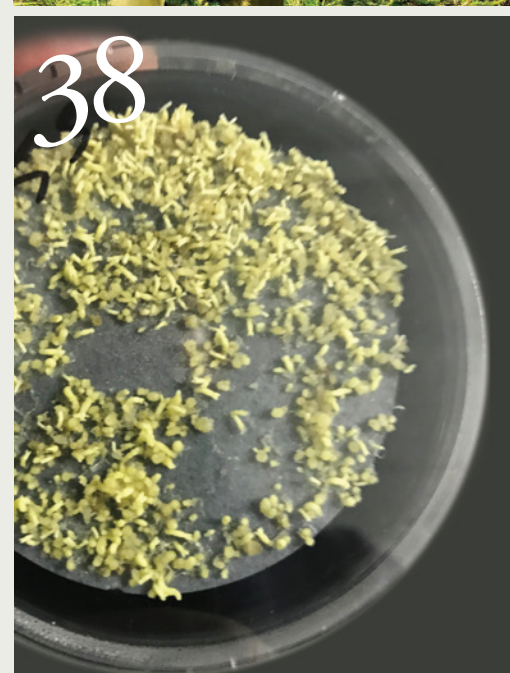
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and Charlie Start

Many thanks to all the writers for their generous contributions, and to the advertisers as their support makes it possible to continue to provide a quality educational publication for our readers.



GREAT LAKES

CHRISTMAS TREE JOURNAL

Published for members of the:

MICHIGAN CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

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GREAT LAKES CHRISTMAS TREE JOURNAL

The Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal is published four times per year: January 10, April 10, July 10 and October 10.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year!



Trees for Troops FedEx pick-up event at Wahmhoff Farms Nursery in Gobles, MI. This was Michigan's 20th year participating in the program. The team from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) presented us with a proclamation from Governor Gretchen Whitmer declaring December as Christmas tree month! Pictured L to R: Nick Babcock MDARD dairy and produce safety inspector and an Army veteran., MDARD Chief of Staff Kathy Angerer, Betsy Wahmhoff, Dan Wahmhoff, Amy Start, and MDARD Director Tim Boring.

AMY START

Executive Director of the Michigan Christmas Tree Association and Editor of the Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal

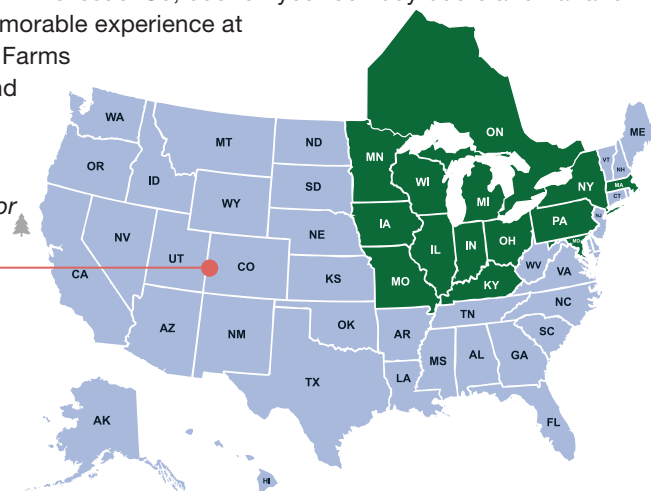
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Here we are in 2025, can you believe it? As we embark on a new year, I want to extend our gratitude to all the contributors to our Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal. From our valued advertisers to our state partners, talented article writers, and our exceptional educational partner, Michigan State University. Our publication would not be possible without their support. Together, we strive to deliver content in each issue that not only benefits your farm but strengthens the Christmas tree industry for years to come.

We are thrilled to announce the addition of a new state to our GLCTJ family: the Kentucky Christmas Tree Association! We are honored to have them join us and are excited to see our journal continue to expand its reach. We are delighted that another Christmas tree association recognizes the value of our publication and has chosen to offer it as a member benefit!

Mark your calendars for "Cowboys and Christmas Trees" a National Christmas Tree Meeting, which will be held in Michigan at Dutchman Tree Farms. We are proud to partner with the National Christmas Tree Association, the Mid-America Christmas Tree Association, the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association, and the Illinois Christmas Tree Association for this event. To get a glimpse of the impressive operations at Dutchman Tree Farms and Northern Pines Nursery, be sure to read the featured article in this issue. So, dust off your cowboy boots and hat and join us for a memorable experience at Dutchman Tree Farms for Cowboys and Christmas, July 24-26!

Amy Start, Editor



This map to the right illustrates our publication's reach and partner states.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2025 CALENDAR

Jan 31 – Feb

ICTGA Winter Meeting will be held at the Boone County Fairgrounds, just north of Zionsville, IN

February 6–7

PCTGA Winter Meeting, Wyndham Garden State College

February 28

Michigan Christmas Tree Association Winter Meeting, Double Tree by Hilton, Grand Rapids

Feb. 28 – March 1

MNCTA Winter Convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in St. Cloud, MN

July 17–19

CTFNY Summer Meeting will be held at Springside Farm in Fabius, NY

July 24–26

Michigan Christmas Tree Association hosts the National Christmas Tree Association & Mid America Christmas Tree (MACT) Association Summer Meeting at Dutchman Tree Farms, Manton, Michigan

September 12-13

MNCTA Summer Convention will be held at Guggisberg Tree Farm in New Ulm. 🌲

Visit association websites for more meeting details!

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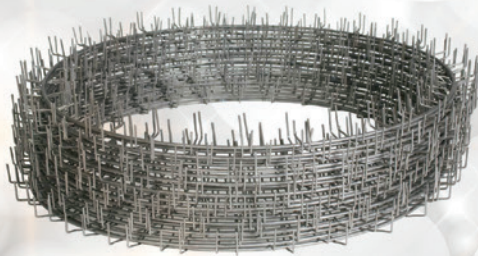
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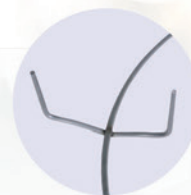
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New Digital Marketing Initiatives Share Key Messaging With Targeted Audiences



Virtual Christmas Tree Farm Tours Reach More Than 1,800 Classrooms

This season, the Real Christmas Tree Board launched a new consumer outreach program designed to engage educators, students and parents prior to the start of the holiday-tree purchasing season – Virtual Farm Tours of real Christmas tree

farms. Both virtual tours – one in Michigan and the other in Oregon – were hosted in early November. Because these tours are virtual, they are available to classrooms and students across the United States – in fact, students from 40 different states joined one of the live tours. RCTB shared social media messaging with growers that they could use to invite teachers, home schoolers and parents in their community to enjoy a Virtual Farm Tour while learning:

- How the trees grow from seedlings to maturity
- How long it takes before a tree is ready to be harvested and taken home for the holidays
- What the harvesting process looks like
- What it takes to give a tree its Christmas tree shape

Registrations for the tours totaled just over 1,800 classrooms. While the live attendance of the tours was lower than registrations, this is standard practice as many viewers opt to login later and watch the recorded tours at a time convenient for them and their students. As of November 26, the YouTube video recordings have secured 1,066 views. Both tours are available at: <https://virtualfarmtrips.com/on-demand/>.

Cost-effective Holiday Podcast Sponsorship

To expand its reach and engage with consumers while they prepare for the holidays, RCTB became a sponsor of the #1 Christmas Podcast – Christmas Countdown. In the first of two episodes sponsored by RCTB, the RCTB logo was featured in the introduction and RCTB received a generous 11-minute showcase (having sponsored a 2-3 minute segment) at the 43-minute mark in the YouTube segment (use the QR code below to view the segment). The Christmas Countdown hosts also shared their number one reason for choosing a real Christmas tree – its fresh scent – on their Instagram channel.





Eight RCTB Research Projects Funded For 2024-2025

Each year the Real Christmas Tree Board Research Committee – comprised of diverse growers from across the U.S. – invests more than \$200,000 in research projects aimed at addressing growers' greatest concerns. At the end of the summer, the RCTB Board approved the following research projects.

Effectiveness of Fungicides in Reducing Phytophthora Root Rot Losses in Christmas Tree Plantations – Washington State University – Dr. Gary Chastagner and Dr. Marianne Elliot

Managing Phytophthora root rot in noble and Fraser fir plantations is a significant challenge for U.S. Christmas tree growers and while cultural management methods can help manage PRR, chemical fungicides offer another potential solution. Because there is limited research on fungicides' efficacy and residual activity in conifers, Washington State University will conduct field trials to assess the top-performing fungicides' effectiveness in protecting seedlings and reducing disease severity, including which application methods are most impactful, optimal timing of fungicide treatments and how long treatments remain effective.

Bioassays to Test Pre- and Post-harvest Chemistry to Prevent Needle Loss – Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – Dr. Rich Cowles

Ethylene gas, which is generated by a tree after the trauma of cutting or drying, signals enzymes that lead to needle loss in Christmas trees. This project will determine whether products that can manipulate ethylene production can be applied preharvest as a foliar spray to prevent needle loss. In addition, the researchers will evaluate compounds that block ethylene biosynthesis or plant tissue response

to ethylene, to determine which are useful to preserve trees while being displayed. Researchers will collaborate with the fir breeding program in Nova Scotia to evaluate these tools.

Managing Cone Formation in Abies Christmas Tree Species – Michigan State University – Dr. Bert Cregg

Fraser fir trees frequently produce copious quantities of cones in Christmas tree plantations, resulting in significant costs to growers for cone removal. Genetic selection for reduced coning offers the best long-term solution for growers. Therefore, this research team will evaluate Fraser fir progeny from the three cohorts at the Michigan State University Reduced Coning Seed Orchard. A subset of trees from each genotype will be subjected to two watering regimes and then evaluated for coning (cones per tree; proportion of trees with cones).

Improving Christmas Tree Plantation Establishment: Impacts of Seedling Quality and Preplant Treatments – Michigan State University – Dr. Bert Cregg

Mortality of seedlings and transplants is a major concern when establishing conifers for Christmas tree production as this represents a direct loss to growers and results in additional costs due to replanting, reduced tree growth and reduced plantation uniformity. Michigan State University will establish field plots with cooperating nurseries to investigate two approaches to improving plantation establishment: managing seedling quality and cultural treatments at planting. MSU also will work with cooperating Christmas tree growers to investigate the effects of treatments after planting (e.g., mulch, compost, biochar, shade blocks) on growth and survival of Fraser fir and Canaan fir seedlings.

Evaluating New Herbicides to Manage Resistant Weeds in Christmas Trees – Oregon State University – Dr. Marcelo Moretti

This project will expand evaluations of chemical weed control (tiafenacil and florpyrauxifen-benzyl) in Christmas trees and focus on their safety and efficacy during the growing season. Researchers will test Tiafenacil's impact on non-dormant trees with foliage exposed to the herbicide. Because it was determined that florpyrauxifen-benzyl is safe for Christmas trees only when direct contact with foliage was avoided, researchers will test whether an early winter treatment with florpyrauxifen-benzyl will harm dormant Christmas trees. In addition, the project will evaluate two new herbicide commercial mixtures to assess whether their chemical weed control properties can positively impact the quality of commercially produced Christmas trees.

CoFirGE Part II: Establishment and Early Characteristics of Indiana and Pennsylvania Sites – Pennsylvania State University – Dr. Ricky Bates

Diseases, pests, and adaptability to regional environmental conditions can limit where Christmas tree growers produce certain types of Christmas trees. The Collaborative Fir Germplasm Evaluation II project was initiated to identify elite Trojan and Nordmann firs that produce excellent Christmas trees, and to obtain a better understanding of how site and environmental conditions are affecting the growth and

Eight RCTB Research Projects Funded For 2024-2025 continued...

postharvest quality of Trojan and Nordmann firs. This project will evaluate the establishment and growth characteristics of the CoFirGE II sites in Indiana and Pennsylvania and provide growers important information regarding the heat and cold tolerance, bud break sequence and needle retention of Nordmann fir and Trojan fir planted in the Midwest.

Evaluation of select fungicides for control of Needle Blight (*Passalora sequoia*) on Leyland Cypress Christmas Trees– Auburn University – Dr. Jeremy Pickens

Passalora sequoia is a major disease of Leyland cypress and other species that can render a crop of trees unmarketable if growers miss even a few fungicide applications. Bi-weekly fungicide sprays are recommended; however, most growers can only apply the sprays monthly. Considering the expense and labor-intensity of applications and the fungicides, this project will re-examine the efficacy of the fungicides and whether resistance has developed since the last efficacy study in 2002. Additionally, this project will explore newer chemistries that have become available and may have activity on this blight.

Is *Phytophthora Vexans* Causing Disease in Christmas Trees? – Rutgers University – Dr. Timothy Waller

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the pathogenicity of *Phytophthora vexans* isolates collected from symptomatic plants in New Jersey towards commonly grown Christmas trees, including (*Abies*) Canaan, Fraiser, Concolor, Turkish, (*Pseudotsuga*) Douglas Fir, and (*Picea*) Colorado Blue, and Norway. Researchers will explore the hypothesis that this pathogen can cause disease in numerous Christmas tree genera and species. In addition, this project will gather baseline information on pathogenicity, flood condition inoculations (due to increasingly volatile climatic events) and lay a foundation for variety/provenance trials in the future.

RTCTB Launches Online Grower Portal to Simplify Harvest Reporting and Assessment Payments

RCTB's new Grower Portal allows growers to report their harvest, pay assessments electronically, review past harvest records and previous season payments in one convenient digital location. The portal was launched in December.



Upcoming Webinars

RCTB's quarterly webinar series features RCTB-funded research projects. There is no cost to register for the webinars. Those who attend the live sessions will have the ability to ask questions of the presenters. Register for the live session using the QR code or at:



<https://events.anr.msu.edu/RCTBwinter25/>.

The webinars will be recorded and available at:

<https://www.realchristmastreeboard.org/resources/webinars/>

The Theory and Practice of Reducing Cone Formation in Fraser Fir – Dr. Bert Cregg, Michigan State University

January 14, 2025 – 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST

Fraser fir precious cone formation causes many issues for Christmas tree farmers. Cones are a photosynthetic sink and when large numbers are present can reduce vegetative growth. In addition, cones are not persistent, and after breaking down leave unappealing stalks on the tree. Hand removal of cones is expensive, due to the high amount of manual labor involved. Worker safety issues also may arise due to the use of ladders to remove cones on tall trees. Plant growth regulators have been tested to prevent the formation of reproductive buds and thereby prevent the formation of cones. Other experiments tested the use of caustic materials applied to cones to chemically eliminate them. Experimental results will be discussed, showing how these products may be able to reduce the use of labor to physically remove cones.

Keys to Managing *Phytophthora* Root Rot in Christmas Tree Plantations – Dr. Gary Chastagner, Washington State University

January 28, 2025 – 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST

Phytophthora root rot can be a devastating disease for Christmas tree production resulting in high mortality rates of trees during any stage of production. This webinar will outline the mechanisms of PRR spreading, damage and signs of PRR-infected trees, and what key management steps growers can take to manage PRR in their Christmas tree fields. 🌲

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David, Sam & Jim Cartner (L to R) presenting the official White House Christmas tree.

NCTA Presents the 2024 White House Christmas Tree to First Lady Jill Biden

The official beginning of Christmas arrived at the White House on November 25 in the form of a majestic Fraser fir Christmas tree. The tree was delivered to First Lady Jill Biden at the White House, via horse-drawn wagon. This very special Christmas tree was presented by Cartner's Christmas Tree Farm from Newland, North Carolina and will be on display in the Blue Room of the White House this holiday season.

Brothers David, Sam and Jim Cartner were named 2024 Grand Champion Growers in the National Christmas Tree Association's Christmas National Tree and Wreath contest. The award winner earns the title of Grand Champion Grower, and the honor of presenting a Christmas tree to the White House.

"We are honored to have the opportunity to represent the Christmas tree growers of America, by continuing the tradition of providing a farm-grown Christmas tree to the White House, which will be viewed by millions of people. This year, our Christmas tree also showcases the resilience of Christmas tree farmers and communities across western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene," said Sam Cartner.

The spectacular Fraser fir was hand selected by Robert Downing, White House Chief Usher, and Dale Haney, White House Superintendent of Grounds at Cartner's farm in North Carolina on October 28th.

"The Cartner family exemplifies the commitment of Christmas tree growers across the country," said John Wyckoff, President of the National Christmas Tree Association. "We are proud to grow a product that provides cherished memories for families and is often the centerpiece of their Christmas celebration."

2024 is the 59th year a member from the National Christmas Tree Association has presented the White House with a Christmas tree.

Legislative Update

NCTA signed on to a coalition letter, consisting of 198 agricultural organizations, to the Trump Transition Team stating the groups' interest in administration nominees and appointees who commit to science and risk-based decision making. The letter states "Science and risk-based decision making will ensure that policy is factually based and efficient in ensuring consumer health and safety. Our organizations support food and nutrition policies that are based on robust scientific evidence, deliver measurable benefits to consumers, and empower consumers to make informed and healthy purchasing decisions while preventing misunderstanding and confusion."

NCTA also signed on to a letter to the House and Senate Ag Committees to clarify why the tools used in agriculture, including pesticides and genetic innovations, are safe, appropriately regulated, and essential for maintaining American competitiveness and national security. The letter strongly urged Congress and federal regulators to reject any efforts to undermine the existing risk- and science-based regulatory frameworks for these technologies, which would make the U.S. more reliant on foreign competitors for food and agricultural goods. The letter described why these tools are greatly needed, especially for maintaining American competitiveness and national security; highlighted the various harms that would occur should access to these tools be impeded; and affirmed

NEWS FROM THE NCTA



The large media gathering to cover the presentation, their coverage of the event reached an audience as large as that of the Super Bowl.

that these tools already have in place appropriate science- and risk-based regulatory systems, which should not be undermined.

NCTA signed on to a letter to EPA commenting on EPA's draft insecticide strategy. The letter states, "Insecticides are essential for U.S. agriculture, as well as to many non-agricultural users. To lose meaningful access to or use of these vital tools would stand to inflict billions of dollars in irreparable harm to U.S. crops, livestock operations, as well as the consumers we serve. We are greatly concerned that the cost and complexity of the draft IS, as proposed, would result in these harms coming to

pass for many individual operations and our rural communities. While we support EPA becoming compliant with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and all the Agency's legal obligations, it must do so in a way that does not drastically disrupt U.S. agriculture, other vital users of insecticides, and the consumers who rely on the food, fuel, fiber, and other services we produce." The letter details the coalition's ideas and offers assistance on how to meet those goals and reduce EPA's own regulatory burden. ▲

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Photo credit: Kate Dodde,
Dutchman Tree Farms



BY ANDREW BOSSERMAN, CPA

Andrew Bosserman is a tax attorney, Certified Public Accountant, and former IRS agent with an in-depth knowledge of the Christmas tree industry gained through owning and operating his own Christmas tree farm. Andrew lives in Charlotte, North Carolina with his family, where they enjoy hiking in the North Carolina mountains, spending time with family and friends, and volunteering at their local church. To contact Andrew and discover more Christmas tree tax resources, please visit www.christmastreetax.com.



As I'm writing this article in late November 2024, the tax landscape for Christmas tree growers may be facing significant changes during Trump's second term. During his first presidency, Trump enacted the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (the "TCJA") which introduced many tax saving provisions. However, many of these provisions are set to expire on December 31, 2025.

TRUMP'S NEXT PRESIDENCY COULD IMPACT CHRISTMAS TREE GROWER TAXES

Below are five key areas of possible tax changes and their potential implications for Christmas tree growers:

1) Continued Phase-Out of Bonus Depreciation

The TCJA introduced 100% bonus depreciation, allowing growers to deduct the full cost of eligible equipment and property purchases. However, the bonus depreciation percentage has decreased since 2023 and is set to decrease to 40% in 2025. For Christmas tree growers planning to invest in new equipment, this phase-out means a longer depreciation timeline, reducing immediate tax relief for these expenditures.

An alternative to bonus depreciation is Section 179 expensing. Section 179 allows businesses to immediately deduct the cost of qualifying property

(subject to limitations). The main downside to Section 179 expensing is that a grower must have net income to use it. Most start-up growers will not be able to use Section 179 expensing due to tax losses generated in the early years of farming.

While Section 179 provides flexibility, its limitations will not compensate for the reduction in bonus depreciation. Growers should analyze how to optimize both bonus depreciation and Section 179 expensing for upcoming equipment purchases.

2) Potential Elimination of the Qualified Business Income (QBI) Deduction

The QBI deduction allows growers structured as pass-through entities (such as single-member LLCs, partnerships, and S-corporations) to deduct up to 20% of their qualified business income. This deduction is set to expire at the end of 2025, meaning growers

would face higher effective tax rates on their business income.

However, the best tax-saving strategy for Christmas tree growers remains the capital gain method under IRC § 631. By electing the capital gain method, growers can classify the income from the sale of cut trees as long-term capital gains rather than ordinary income, resulting in significant tax savings. Even with the potential elimination of the QBI deduction, growers who utilize this method can continue to save significantly on their taxes.

3) Decrease of the Standard Deduction

The TCJA substantially increased the standard deduction. Before 2018, the standard deduction was \$6,500 for single filers and \$13,000 for married filers. In 2024, the standard deduction is \$13,850 for single filers and \$27,700 for married filers.

Current proposals have suggested reducing the standard deduction to pre-2017 levels, increasing taxable income for those who do not itemize deductions. For many small-scale Christmas tree growers with modest expenses, this reduction could result in higher taxes. Growers should consider itemizing deductions in future years if Congress reduces the standard deduction.

4) Tax Rate Increases

Overall tax rates could increase to pre-2018 levels (a top rate of 39.6%) if Congress does not act. Growers should pay attention to these changes, as they could affect both ordinary income and long-term capital gains. The capital gain method generally results in increased tax savings if ordinary income rates increase, potentially making this strategy more valuable.

5) Decrease of the Estate Tax Exemption

The estate tax exemption, which increased under the TCJA, currently allows individuals to transfer up to \$13.61 million (\$27.22 million for married couples) tax-free. Proposals have suggested a decrease in the exemption to \$5 million per individual (\$10 million for married couples), indexed for inflation. However, Trump will likely attempt to keep the exemption high.

A decrease in the estate tax exemption amount would expose many more Christmas tree growers with significant landholdings or other assets to estate taxes. Growers should begin planning now for generational transfers of farmland and other assets. Strategies such as lifetime gifts,

irrevocable trusts, or family partnerships can help mitigate the impact of a reduced exemption.

Conclusion

The Trump administration's tax proposals could have significant implications for Christmas tree growers, with the potential expiration of some or all of the TCJA tax-saving provisions. Proactive planning is more critical than ever. Growers should work closely with tax professionals to navigate these changes and identify strategies to maintain profitability. The capital gain method is permanent and will always be the best tax saving strategy for Christmas tree growers. ▲

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16th International Christmas Tree Research and Extension Conference held in Denmark

BY BERT CREGG, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE AND DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY



Image 1 – Attendees at the 16th International Christmas Tree Research and Extension (CTRE) conference in Kerteminde, Denmark.

Researchers and extension personnel from North America and Europe met in Kerteminde, Denmark August 11-15, 2024, to discuss the latest in Christmas tree research and extension programming (Image 1). The conference was organized by Drs. Ulrik Braüner Nielsen and Jing Xu at the University of Copenhagen. The conference program featured 33 oral and poster presentations by conference participants as well as field tours to local growers and research sites and a visit to the Langesø fair, the largest Christmas tree trade show in Europe.

Research highlights

This year's CTRE program included 23 oral presentations and 10 poster presentations on topics ranging from marketing to marker-aided selection. Below are highlights of some of the research presentations of interest to growers in the Great Lakes region.

Several presentations at the meeting focused on efforts to accelerate breeding of conifers for Christmas trees.

Jing Xu (University of Copenhagen) reported on the susceptibility of Nordmann fir to silver fir wooly adelgid (SFWA), which is related to balsam wooly adelgid. Xu and her colleagues compared the susceptibility of Nordmann fir from several seed orchards to SFWA and found that the genotypes varied widely in level of damage to the insect. This suggests that selection for resistance is possible. Moreover, they found a high correlation between early screening and later assessments of adelgid damage, indicating that trees can be selected for resistance at a relatively young age.

Ulrik Braüner Nielsen (University of Copenhagen) described the application of genetic markers called SNP's ("Snips" = Single nucleotide polymorphisms) to 'ad hoc' tree breeding (Image 2). To put this development in context, it is important to understand that historically forest tree breeding has largely depended on studying open-pollinated families. That is, we propagate trees produced from cones collected from individual trees and study their performance. Since we know the material parent (the tree we collected the seed from), we can make inferences about which trees in the seed orchard are

the best maternal parents. But unless we collect pollen and make controlled crosses (a laborious and time-consuming process), we don't know which trees in a seed orchard are the best 'dads'. Through the analysis of SNP markers, however, geneticists can identify both parents of superior individuals from a population of seed orchard progeny, which can help determine which trees to retain in the orchards. Moreover, the information from the ad hoc breeding approach can help specialists refine estimates of heritability (what proportion of a trait, such as needle retention or insect resistance, is passed to offspring) and breeding values (how much a trait can be improved through selection).

Colin Palmer (British Christmas Tree Association) presented key findings from his research on the ecological aspects of Christmas tree production in the UK. This research has been focused on documenting and understanding the

impacts of Christmas tree production including effects on populations of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians as well as soil carbon and soil health. In one assessment, the researchers inventoried the occurrence of birds on 7 sites (2 in Northern England and 5 in central England). They recorded the presence of 40 bird species; five of which (greenfinch, linnet, spotted flycatcher, tree pipit, and yellowhammer) are 'red-listed' as endangered species and 8 additional species that are 'yellow-listed' as species of concern. Based on grower surveys, Palmer found that Christmas tree plantations supported an array of animals including mammals, reptiles, amphibians and nocturnal moths (Image 3). However, Christmas tree plantations lagged behind grasslands in soil health, with lower populations of beneficial soil fungi and bacteria. The investigators are studying the effects of cover crops as a means to increase ground cover and soil carbon to overcome these deficiencies.

Kelsey Leonard (University of Waterloo) introduced the Christmas Tree Lab that she has established at the University of Waterloo in southern Ontario. Dr. Leonard presented research that she and her Research Associate, Alison Clarke, have initiated on understanding and mitigating the potential impacts of climate change on Christmas tree production in Ontario. Currently the researchers are conducting surveys of growers within Ontario to determine the current impacts of climate change on Christmas tree farms. Beyond documenting climate change impacts, additional goals of the Christmas Tree Lab at Waterloo are to develop an ecological calendar to

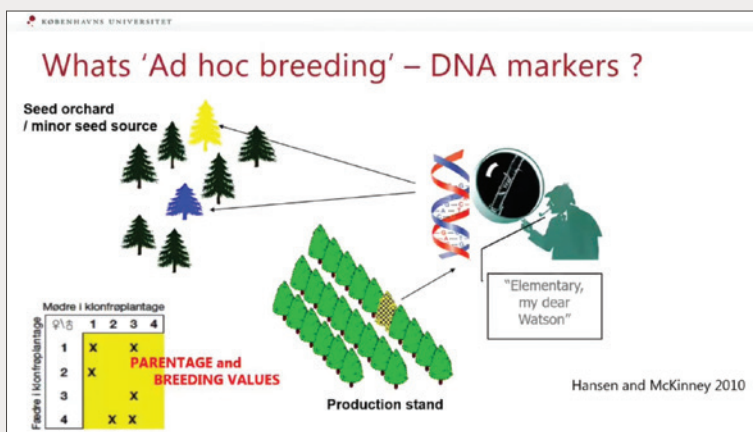


Image 2 – Advances in the development of DNA markers allow geneticists to identify male and female parents of superior trees. (Image: Ulrik Braüner Nielsen)

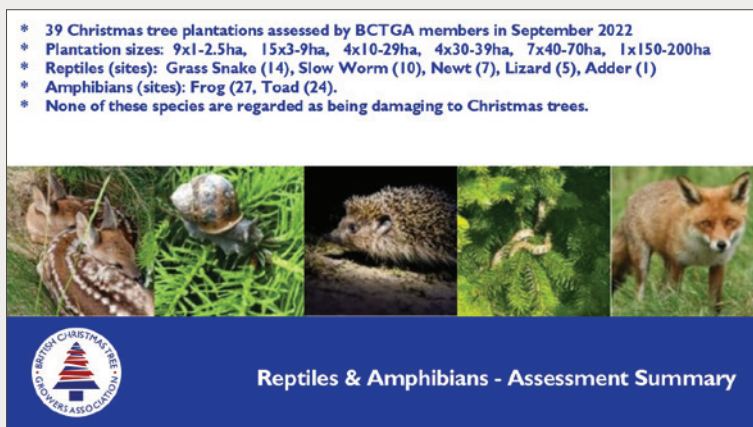


Image 3 – Research in the UK identified a range of ecological services provided by Christmas tree plantations. (Image: Colin Palmer).

optimize farm activities in relation to changing climate, foster greater collaboration between Christmas tree growers and natural resource agencies, and identify and fill key knowledge gaps (Image 4).

Mason MacDonald (Dalhousie University) reported on research in his lab on understanding the utility of using spectral imaging from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's, aka drones) to assess foliar nutrient status of balsam fir Christmas tree plantations. In their project, they developed images of plantations using UAV's equipped with spectral imaging cameras (Image 5). The spectral cameras record light reflectance in individual wavelengths including red and infrared (IR). From the red and IR wavelengths data the researchers calculate the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index. Because chlorophyll absorbs red light more than IR, NDVI is often correlated with leaf chlorophyll content, which, in turn, is related to foliar nutrients. In their trial, MacDonald's lab conducted paired assessments of leaf nutrient concentrations based on standard foliar sampling with NDVI values from the UAV flights in both spring and fall. For both spring and fall assessments NDVI values were

significantly correlated with foliar nitrogen (Image 5). Associations between NDVI values and other nutrients (e.g., phosphorus, potassium) depended on the season of sampling.



Image 4 – The Christmas Tree Lab at the University of Waterloo is working with growers to identify and mitigate the impacts of climate change on Christmas tree production (Image: Kelsey Leonard and Allison Clarke).

NDVI

- NDVI = normalized difference vegetation index
- A useful parameter to remotely assess chlorophyll
- Linked to nutrition in many species
- Can be measured via UAV

$$NDVI = \frac{(NIR - Red)}{(NIR + Red)}$$



Image 5 – Remote imagery using UAV's allows researchers to study spectral reflectance patterns in balsam fir plantations. (Image: Mason MacDonald).

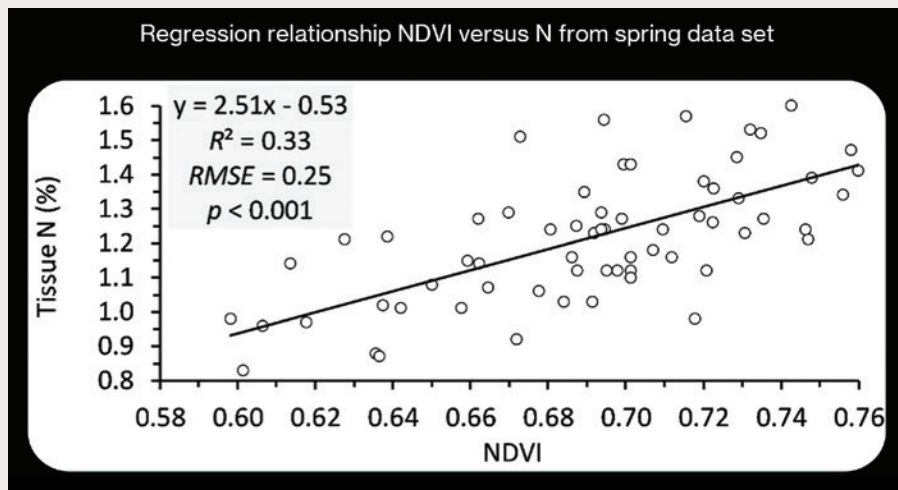


Image 6 – Understanding the relationship between leaf spectral reflectance (NDVI) and foliar nutrient concentration may allow growers to assess plantation nutrition using drones. (Image: Mason MacDonald).

The results suggest that remote sensing using UAV can provide broad-scale information on nutrient status, especially N, of Christmas tree plantations but further research is needed to refine these relationships (Image 6).

Chal Landgren (Oregon State University) provided an update on long-term trends in the Christmas tree industry in the Pacific Northwest. As with other segments of the country, production in Oregon has consolidated, and the number of operations declined from 690 in 2015 to 380 in 2023. Christmas tree

harvests in Oregon peaked in 2008 at just over 7 million trees and declined to slightly more than 3 million trees in 2023. Tree planting in Oregon has remained stable over recent years. Oregon growers are increasingly planting Nordmann and Turkish fir (310,000 trees in 2016 to 1.2 million in 2024). Pacific Northwest growers are also facing increasing issues with seedling mortality due to increasingly variable weather patterns. Based on Oregon State's survey, seedling mortality increased from 12% in 2020 to 25% in 2023, with 1.4 million trees lost in 2023.

CTRE meeting tours

The tours associated with the CTRE meeting highlight some of the differences in Christmas tree production in Denmark and Europe versus North America. Nordmann fir is by far the most widely produced

species in Europe and is the main species grown by Danish growers. Denmark produces about 11 million trees annually. However, around 90% of these trees are exported. In contrast to the U.S. where many consumers purchase their tree in late November, Europeans typically select their tree just before Christmas and display it until Jan. 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. On the tour, the Danish host noted that tree preferences vary throughout Europe and that growers must adapt their cultural practices to their intended market. The grower noted that French customers typically prefer a fuller, denser tree; whereas consumers in Germany prefer trees with a more open, layered form (Image 7). European growers place a premium on preserving a whorl



Image 7 – A Danish Christmas tree producer explains the challenges of culturing trees for different market preferences throughout Europe.

of terminal buds in order to maintain tree symmetry. To prevent excessive leader growth, the grower we visited relies on a combination of mechanical leader control with the top-stop nipper and chemical growth control using Con-shade (S-ABA) (Image 8).



Image 8 – Some Danish growers use the Top-stop nipper, alone or in combination with plant growth regulators, to control tree growth.

The CTRE tour included a stop at a clonal seed orchard that researchers from the University of Copenhagen are using to understand the relationship between silver fir gall adelgid and neonectria canker. Research at the site demonstrated the linkage between adelgid and subsequent infections by neonectria canker (Image 9).

In addition to producing Nordmann fir for Christmas trees, Denmark is a major producer of boughs for florist greenery and wreaths. Danish producers grow noble fir, which is native to the Pacific Northwest, for boughs. They maintain plantations that are harvested periodically for high-quality bough material (Image 10).



Image 9 – Dr. Jing Xu (center) explains research on the interaction of silver fir adelgid and neonectria canker in Nordmann fir.

The tour also included stops at Levinsen seed company (Image 11), one of the largest conifer seed dealers in Europe, and the Langesø Christmas tree fair.

The Langesø fair is the largest Christmas tree trade show in Europe and featured a wide array of vendors. A consistent theme of products on display at the

show reflect an emphasis on eco-friendly products (Images 12 & 13) and well as mechanization for the tight labor market in Europe (Images 14 & 15).



Image 10 – Denmark is a major producer of noble fir boughs for Europe. (Image: Mason MacDonald).



Image 11 – Seed processing equipment at Levinsen seed A/S.



Image 12 – “A heart for nature”. European growers market the environmental benefits of Christmas trees.

A wide-angle shot of a nursery field with many rows of young evergreen trees planted in neat rows. A dirt path runs through the middle of the field.



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The proceedings of the 2024 CTRE and videos of selected presentations are available at the Christmas Tree Working Group page of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations

(search 'IUFRO Christmas trees' in your browser). The 17th CTRE will be hosted by North Carolina State University in 2026. 🌲



Image 13 – Organically produced fir transplants.



Image 14 – Power-assist hand-pruners for top-work or basal-pruning.



Image 15 – Mechanical tree-cutters.



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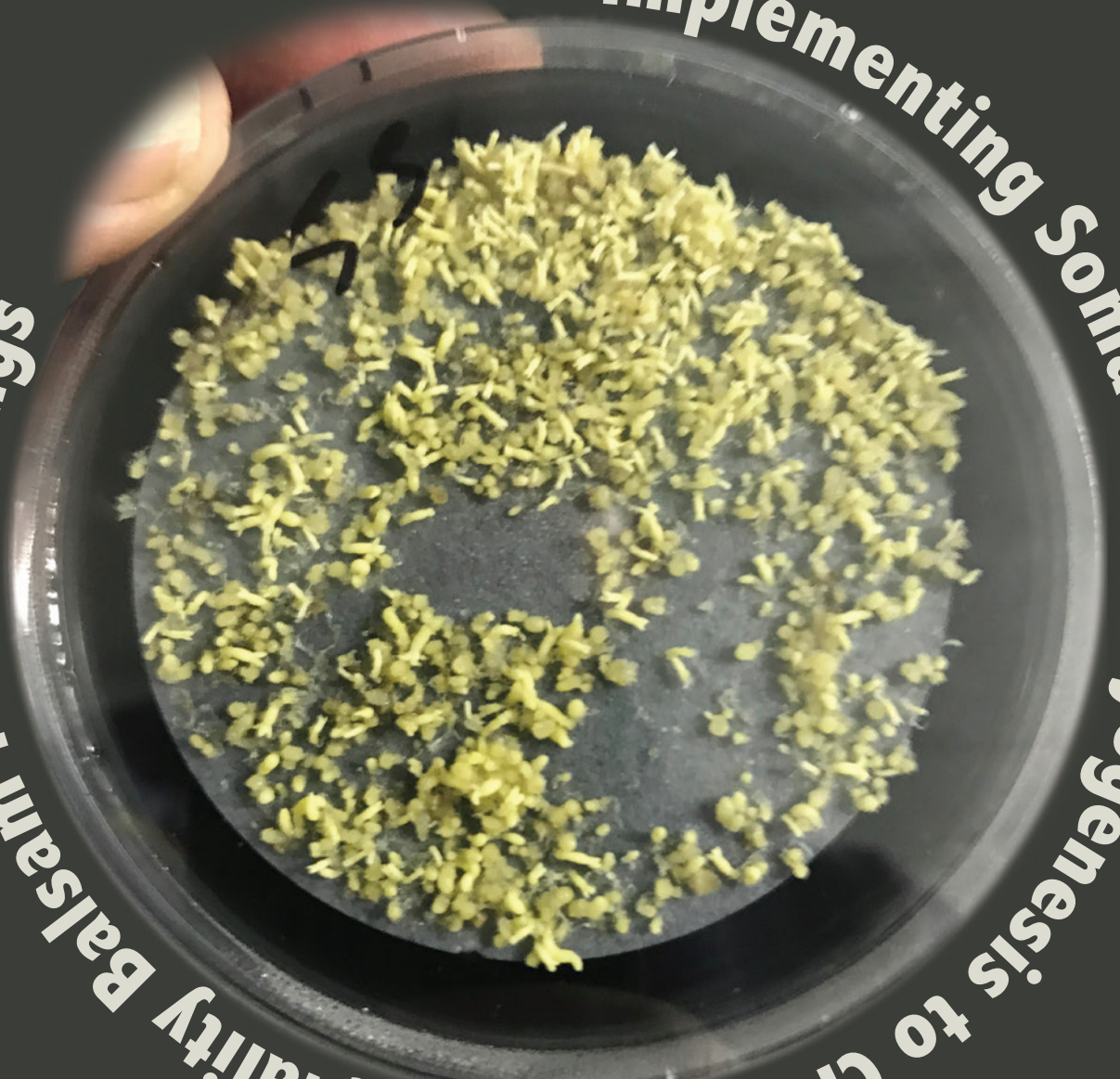
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Implementing Somatic Embryogenesis to Create Higher Quality Balsam Fir Seedlings

BY DON NORTHCOTT
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ADMIN@PHYTOCULTURES.COM
[HTTPS://PHYTOCULTURES.COM](https://phytocultures.com)

Nova Scotia annually harvests in excess of a million Balsam Fir Christmas trees and exports them to many regions around the world. Some destinations are nearby, while others are geographically distant (ie. the Caribbean, Central America, and the Middle East). For long-duration shipping, trees are moved in frozen containers and arrive at their destination in late November or early December, prior to peak Christmas tree demand. Those trees are unloaded and placed in stands, wrapping is removed, branches expand, and in some instances, needles may fall off some trees. Nova Scotia's Christmas Tree Council resolved to fix this needle drop problem and in doing so, improve their customer's experience. One thing they realized was some trees, following early harvest and containerized shipping, lost their needles while other trees had very good needle retention and generated a positive report.

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An obvious question is why do some trees have superior needle retention, and others do not. Well, natural variation exists in Nova Scotian forests and superior trees with better needle retention characteristics were identified. Capitalizing on this difference could solve this needle retention issue.

Dalhousie University has embarked on a number of research efforts to enhance needle retention of Balsam Fir Christmas trees. Short-term projects identified cultural techniques to improve needle retention such as post-harvest handling, hormone treatments and applications of various treatments to cut trees and branches.

For a longer term solution, Nova Scotia producers identified superior trees, to be used as seed trees. These trees presented many ideal characteristics such as good form and better needle retention. Ideally, clonal propagation of these seed

trees could be done to produce superior Christmas trees. Regrettably with Balsam Fir trees (as with most conifers) they are not easy to clone through vegetative cuttings. In fact, as conifer trees age, they become resistant to propagation techniques. So, how do we overcome this hurdle?

At this point, we enter a world where propagation from seeds or even grafting is left behind and elements of biotechnology takes over. Somatic Embryogenesis, (SE), involves the creation of seedlings from somatic cells to yield genetically identical propagules each having potential to yield large numbers of identical copies (Photo 1). A SE laboratory proof of concept process was developed by Dalhousie University, where the creation of viable embryos and seedlings derived from crosses with superior trees was possible, and presented an approach to grow large numbers of identical superior trees.

Phytocultures, a plant propagation company was engaged to scale this process to commercial volumes. Since this project's start in 2017, scaling this technology has been an effort fraught with hidden challenges as while Balsam Fir is weed like in Nova Scotia, under laboratory conditions test tube production is frustrating at best.

Let's take a look at this technology as there are multiple steps involved during breeding and field selection and then moving from field to laboratory and back to greenhouses and out to field again before we are truly exercising this technical process.

Let us start with an experienced eye, that of a Christmas Tree producer. Resident with these experienced growers is a wealth of knowledge on preferred tree characteristics, these talents can be brought to bear in selecting superior trees which also double as candidates to include in breeding improved trees. Using



Photo 1 – Mass propagation of somatic embryo clones. Credit: Don Northcott

trees selected for positive Christmas tree traits, we then screen these trees for improved needle retention. Selecting two trees, one to provide pollen and another to produce seed, we make a cross. On successful pollination and during early growth of a developing seed, embryos are extracted from these tree crosses (Photo 2).

These extracted embryos are placed on a selective media and encouraged to grow under various regimes of light intensity and temperature. Embryos proliferate into undifferentiated masses of cells on petri plates, this initiates our SE propagation. Developing clumps of cells are referred to as callus and are easily multiplied by teasing them apart and placing them on new petri plates. Each cell in these masses has the potential to transform into an embryo and then into a seed.

First let's examine this multiplication process; a petri plate may have a 5 gram cell mass grown from that developing embryo extracted from an initial seed. This cell mass can be divided into six separate cell clumps. These clumps are then dispersed over new plates of proliferation media to yield six new plates. Following two weeks of growth, you can culture six new plates from each original plate, leading to a rapid multiplication of cells. This one plate becomes 36, becomes, 216 becomes, 1296, and so on. This phase of SE propagation is known as a proliferation phase.

Hold on, we cannot put a cart before our horse. Before we produce large numbers of propagules, we need to first complete an evaluation phase. Following an initial culturing of an embryo we need to complete two tasks, first task will be to place cell lines in our cryo- preservation storage for future use. Our second task will be to produce a few thousand plantlets of each line to initiate field screening of these lines.

Photo 3 – Field screening somatic embryogenesis lines to confirm positive Christmas tree traits. Credit: Don Northcott



Photo 2 – An embryo just removed from a developing seed. Credit: Don Northcott



Field screening of hundreds of lines is important so we can select trees with a full compliment of positive traits such as good color, nice branch angles, heavy inter-nodal branching, attractive needle placement and for this project, trees that have better needle retention characteristics (Photo 3).

Once field testing has been complete, after 5-7 years, we return to our cryopreservation tanks, take out that special SE line that has demonstrated positive characteristics, thaw it and then initiate a production run.

Back to our commercial SE multiplication phase: When you have reached a number of proliferation plates sufficient for your need, say 1296, you then transfer these cells to a media formulation that will

mature these cells by encouraging growth and development of embryos, 1296 proliferation plates will yield say 7776 maturation plates.

These maturation plates have a media formulation that induces cells to differentiate rather than multiply. Thus we have somatic cells transforming into embryos (Photo 4). Proliferated cell masses transferred to maturation plates have a potential to yield 50-150 mature embryos per plate. So from 7776 maturation plates we may see between 380K-1,166K embryos developed.

Following maturation and conditioning of embryos, these embryos may be transferred to a germination media where they develop and grow into a tiny plantlet that has from 3 to 5 needles, a

stem and a root system (Photo 5). In effect a new little tree. Under strict environmental control these little trees are transferred to soil and are encouraged to grow and develop large root and shoot systems.

Sounds simple and straight forward, however, that is far from reality. Balsam Fir, (*Abies balsamea*), when growing in wild stands of Nova Scotia is weed like. It seems to grow between rocks and in many cases it self-seeds large areas presenting an opportunity for producers to thin stands and encourage managed growth. In tissue culture, this is not the case. We have found each line, developed from an individual seed, needs to be handled in a specific manner.

We have also found these cells,



Photo 4 – Developing Somatic Embryogenesis Embryos.. Credit: Don Northcott

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Photo 5 – A germinated somatic embryogenesis seedling ready for plug trays. Credit: Don Northcott

embryos, or germinated seedlings if they experience any type of stress during the culturing process, they shut down and require a “Winter Period” in order to resume growth. We have identified that 1300 hours at 40 degrees F represents a necessary chill cycle for these cells before resuming growth.

A Phytocultures current status report for 2024 will see approximately 400,000 embryos being produced from ten field tested clones. Each clone bearing a database pedigree revealing parental sources, growth rates, growing degree day flushing requirements, relative needle placement, needle color, measured branch angles along with an inter-nodal branching assessment and of critical interest for Nova Scotia producers a rating on that important needle retention trait.

We believe this SE technology will foster a growing Nova Scotia Balsam Fir Christmas Tree market through production of trees that have improved traits and retain all appreciated Balsam Fir characteristics, and now with enhanced needle retention. 🌲



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If any reservation is canceled in part or in whole after June 23, 2025, a \$50.00 penalty cancellation fee, along with the greater of a one night stay along with any taxes, fees along with any add-ons will be charged to the card on file.



Dutchman Tree Farms and Northern Pines Nursery are thrilled to host the Michigan Christmas Tree Association 2025 Summer Meeting. This year, we're excited to partner with the Bi-Annual National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) and Mid America Christmas Tree (MACT) meetings for a comprehensive industry event. Sessions and meals will be held in Northern Pines Nursery's brand-new greenhouse from July 24-26, 2025. Attendees will have the opportunity to tour Dutchman Tree Farms' loading yard, palletizing systems, expansive fields, and our family-run Choose & Cut operation. This event is a fantastic opportunity for tree farmers, industry experts, and newcomers to connect, learn, and explore the latest industry practices.

Dutchman Tree Farms is a fifth-generation family farm that has grown from humble beginnings into one of the nation's leading suppliers of Christmas trees and related products. Our family is proud to uphold a tradition of quality, hard work, and innovation. Visitors to the Summer Meeting will see firsthand how our family's dedication and love for tree farming have shaped our farm into a model for growth and excellence.

For those new to the industry, the Day 1 New Grower Track is an excellent starting point to learn the basics of Christmas tree farming. This specialized program for those new to the industry

can experience a full afternoon of sessions led by industry leaders, designed to cover fundamental practices, including Site Preparation, Tree Planting, and Dealing with Weeds, offering practical advice for creating a thriving farm. Participants will also gain insight into Retail How-To's and marketing strategies for engaging customers and building a successful business. The program concludes with Nutrient Management and a discussion on Pest Control, giving attendees a comprehensive understanding of tree health and care. This track is an invaluable resource for anyone starting their journey in Christmas tree farming.

One of the most popular tracks at the event will highlight our Choose & Cut operation, which exemplifies how tree



farms can create unforgettable retail experiences. Choose & Cut has become much more than selling trees – it's about offering families a festive outing that builds lasting memories. During the tour, we'll show how we've created a welcoming and immersive experience through careful planning, thoughtful decor, and engaging customer service. Sarah Maciborski will be sharing tips on customer engagement, creating family-friendly experiences, and using branding to turn first-time visitors into lifelong customers. Whether you're new to Choose & Cut or looking to enhance your existing operation, this track will provide valuable takeaways.

For those interested in greenhouse and nursery management, the Northern Pines Nursery tour is not to be missed. Our sophisticated nursery systems ensure we grow high-quality stock that meets the demands of the modern market. Scott Powell will guide attendees through the nursery and greenhouse, explaining everything from seedling care to transplanting. Presentations by experts like Bert Cregg from Michigan State University will cover topics such as Nutrient Management and Planting Stock Quality. Additionally, Jim Rockis will share his expertise on tree genetics, highlighting advancements that help

growers produce resilient, high-quality trees. This track is perfect for growers looking to deepen their knowledge of growing practices and investing in strong planting stock.

We're also excited to include our neighbors and friends at Getty Tree Farms. Visitors to Getty Tree Farms will tour three distinct areas showcasing a variety of growing practices. At the Home Farm, participants will learn about the farm's history while viewing mature Fraser and Korean X Balsam trees. At the next field, the focus shifts to Fralsam, Concolor, and white pine trees, with discussions on seed sourcing, deer fencing, and the appearance of Fraser trees. Finally, Kyle Getty will demonstrate advanced techniques like drip irrigation and weed control, comparing products such as Matrix and Sureguard. This track offers a fantastic opportunity to see a range of approaches and innovations in action, all while connecting with fellow growers in the region.

**To Register for
the Meeting Visit
[www.
mcta.org](http://www.mcta.org)**

For large-scale growers, our production and distribution track will offer a behind-the-scenes look at the logistics of high-volume tree farming. At Dutchman Tree Farms, efficiency is key, and our loading yard and palletizing operations are designed to ship large quantities of trees while maintaining top-notch quality. Visitors will see our pot-in-pot production system, which optimizes water usage and soil temperature management. We'll also demonstrate how we use drone technology for inventory and operations management, ensuring accurate counts and streamlined processes. Whether you're looking to scale up your operation or refine your logistics, this track offers invaluable insights.

We can't wait to welcome you to the MCTA 2025 Summer Meeting. In addition to the educational tours and sessions, we're bringing some cowboy flair to the event – Dutchman Tree Farms has almost as many cowboys as Christmas trees! Join us Friday night for an exhibition rodeo that promises to be fun for the whole family. It's the perfect way to relax and celebrate after a day of learning and connecting. Come join us for three days of education, camaraderie, and good old-fashioned farm fun. We look forward to seeing you in July! 🌲



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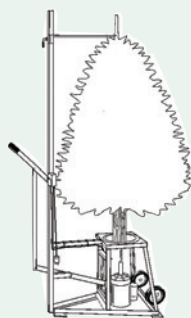
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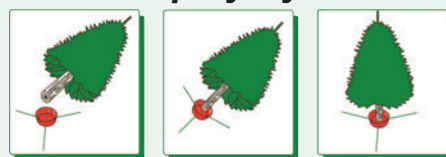


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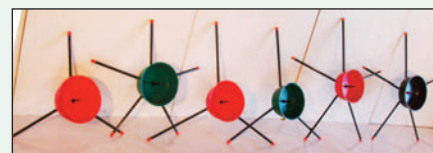
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Weed Biology & Management Series for Christmas Tree Production

Biology & Management of Common Lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*) in Christmas Tree Production



DEBALINA SAHA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album* L.), a member of the goosefoot family (Chenopodiaceae), is a significant weed affecting agricultural systems worldwide. This family also includes cultivated crops like spinach and beets. Originally native to Europe and Asia, common lambsquarters has now become one of the most widely distributed and troublesome weeds globally, ranking among the top five most widespread weeds (Holm et al., 1977). This weed emerges throughout the growing season, with peak emergence occurring in mid- to late spring. It thrives in well-drained soils and can begin its emergence early in the growing season. Common lambsquarters are difficult to control for their adaptability and resistance to several herbicides (Curran et al., 2021, Chandran, 2020).

Biology of Common Lambsquarters

Common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album* L.) is an upright, branching summer annual weed that grows between 1 to 6 feet tall and thrives in disturbed, fertile habitats such as barnyards, Christmas tree fields, and farmsteads. This shallow-rooted plant develops from a taproot and produces succulent stems that are grooved, smooth, or hairless, and often streaked with red, purple, or green (Chandran, 2020; Michigan State University Extension, 2015).

The cotyledons are narrow, linear, and dull green to gray, lacking a midvein. The first one or two leaf pairs are opposite, with all subsequent leaves alternating. Mature leaves are highly variable, ranging from triangular and diamond-shaped to lance-shaped (Fig 1), with light green upper surfaces and gray, mealy undersides. Young leaves often have a similar mealy coating on both surfaces, which gives the plant its characteristic whitish appearance (Michigan State University Extension, 2015).

At flowering, small, green or gray-green flowers form in dense clusters at the tips of stems and branches (Fig 2). These flowers produce seeds enclosed in a thin, papery, star-shaped covering. Common lambsquarters is a prolific seed producer, with each plant capable of producing over 70,000 seeds. These seeds exhibit dormancy lasting over 20 years, with approximately 3% being brown and germinating readily, while the remaining black seeds are more dormant (Stevens, 1932; Williams & Harper, 1965). Most seeds remain on the plant until early winter and are dispersed through equipment transfer or livestock digestion, as they can survive passage through the digestive tract (Curran et al., 2021). Germination of common lambsquarters seeds is influenced by light, temperature fluctuations, and nitrate presence in the soil, although only 10–30% of the current season's seeds germinate the following year under favorable conditions (Mohler & DiTommaso, 2006; Forcella et al., 1997).



Figure 1 – Triangular shaped leaves of common lambsquarter. (Photo credits: Debalina Saha, MSU Horticulture)



Figure 2. Greenish colored small flowers of common lambsquarters. (Photo credits: Debalina Saha, MSU, Horticulture).

Propagation

Common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album* L.) propagates exclusively through seed production. Flowering typically occurs in late summer and fall for plants that emerge in the spring. However, plants that emerge later in the season can complete their life cycle and reach the reproductive stage in as little as six weeks (Mohler and DiTomasso, 2005). This rapid reproductive cycle allows the weed to adapt and persist in various environmental conditions. Environmental factors such as prolonged drought can trigger early maturation, enabling common lambsquarters to produce seed under stress. The plant is primarily self-pollinated, although wind can facilitate some degree of cross-pollination. Once flowering begins, seed production occurs over a relatively short period before the plant senesces and dies. This efficient seed production strategy contributes to its persistence and spread, making it a challenging weed to manage (Curran et al., 2021).

Similar Species

Several species within the *Chenopodium* genus and related groups resemble common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album* L.), including thick-leaved goosefoot (*Chenopodium desiccatum*), oak-leaved goosefoot (*C. glaucum*), maple-leaved goosefoot (*C. hybridum*), and Atriplex patula. The maple-leaved goosefoot has thin, oval leaves with pointed tips and lobes along the margins, forming loose flower clusters, unlike the denser clusters of common lambsquarters. The oak-leaved goosefoot displays small, oblong leaves with irregular edges and whitened undersides, and simpler, less branched flower clusters (Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service).

Additionally, *Atriplex patula* (spreading saltbush) can be distinguished by its larger cotyledons, opposite leaf arrangement in early growth, and small lobes at the leaf bases (Michigan State University Extension, 2015).

Management of Common Lambsquarters

Non-chemical control:

Managing common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album* L.) involves a combination of cultural, mechanical, and mulching practices to suppress its growth and prevent seed production. Fertilizer placement near the crop limits nutrient access for lambsquarters, while cover crops like legumes help disrupt its life cycle. Mulches, such as hardwood chips or pine barks can block sunlight and suppress germination. Mechanically, shallow cultivation or mowing prevents seed production. Combining these practices offers a sustainable, herbicide-free approach to managing common lambsquarters (Chandran, 2020; Curran et al., 2021).

Chemical control:

For larger populations, herbicides specific to labeled crops can be applied. However, some biotypes of common lambsquarters in North America have developed resistance to herbicides in the triazine and ALS-inhibitor families (Chandran, 2020). Populations resistant to ALS-inhibitors have since been identified in Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario (Heap, 2005). Resistance to photosystem II inhibitors (triazines) was first documented in the 1970s in Ontario, Canada (Bandeem and McLaren, 1979). Recently, there is growing concern over its potential resistance to glyphosate, further complicating its management in agricultural production systems across North America (Curran et al., 2021).

Preemergence control:

There are several effective preemergence herbicides available for lambsquarter control in Christmas tree production. Goaltender (oxyfluorfen) can provide excellent control whereas, Barricade (prodiamine), Cobra (lactofen), Gallery (isoxaben), and Mission (flazasulfuron) can provide good control in Christmas tree production. These herbicides work by targeting the weed during seed germination, preventing it from establishing in the field (Pennsylvania State University, Department of Plant Science).

Postemergence control:

For established common lambsquarters, postemergence herbicides provide effective control. Some of the good postemergence options are Roundup (glyphosate), Goaltender (oxyfluorfen), Garlon (triclopyr), Frequency (topramezone) for controlling lambsquarters in Christmas tree production. These herbicides are most effective when applied during the weed's early growth stages for optimal results (Pennsylvania State University, Department of Plant Science).

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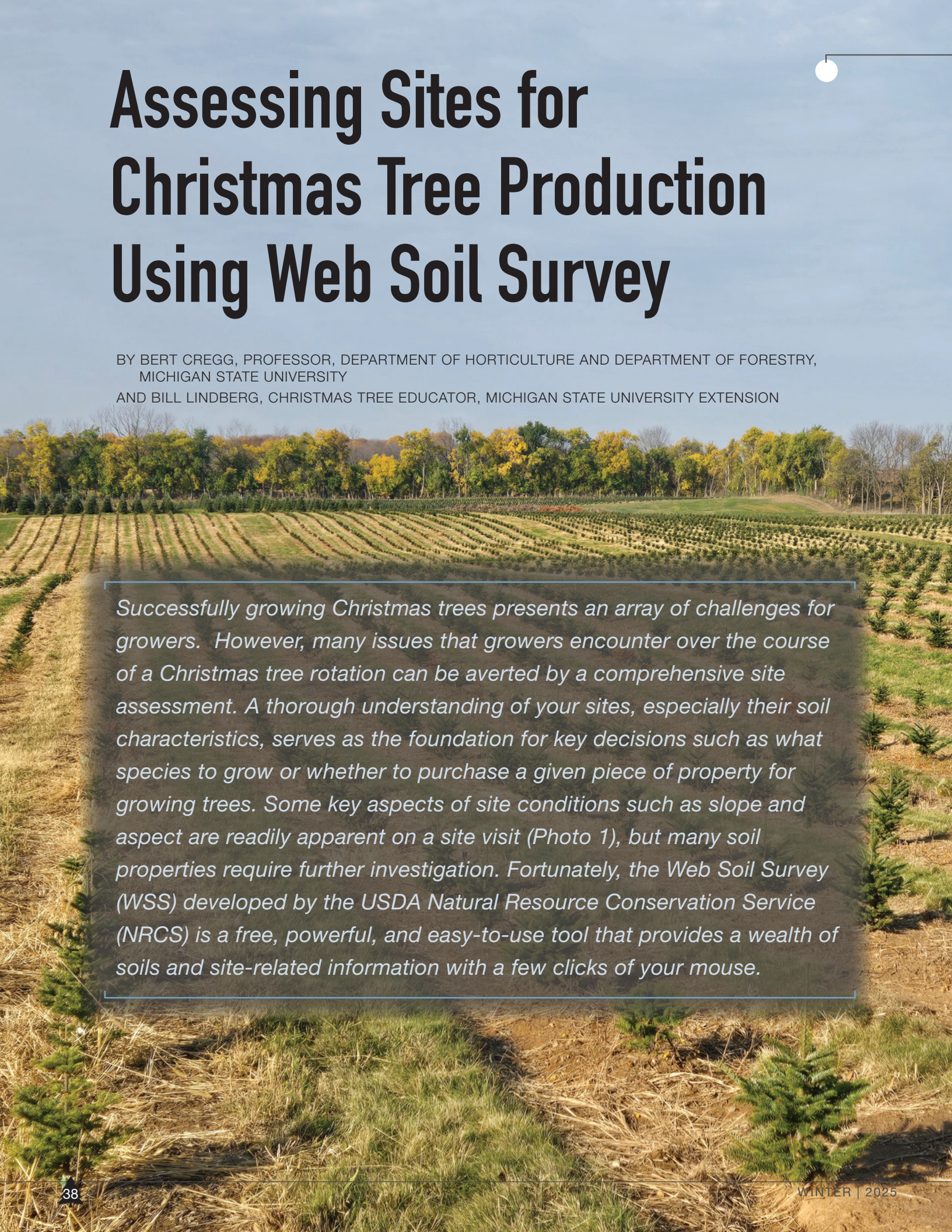
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Assessing Sites for Christmas Tree Production Using Web Soil Survey

BY BERT CREGG, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE AND DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY,
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
AND BILL LINDBERG, CHRISTMAS TREE EDUCATOR, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Successfully growing Christmas trees presents an array of challenges for growers. However, many issues that growers encounter over the course of a Christmas tree rotation can be averted by a comprehensive site assessment. A thorough understanding of your sites, especially their soil characteristics, serves as the foundation for key decisions such as what species to grow or whether to purchase a given piece of property for growing trees. Some key aspects of site conditions such as slope and aspect are readily apparent on a site visit (Photo 1), but many soil properties require further investigation. Fortunately, the Web Soil Survey (WSS) developed by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is a free, powerful, and easy-to-use tool that provides a wealth of soils and site-related information with a few clicks of your mouse.

The Web Soil Survey can be accessed at www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov (search Web Soil Survey in Google or another search site). The site enables users to identify plots of land by street address or by zooming in on an interactive map similar to navigating in Google Maps or similar GPS programs. WSS provides an interactive tool that links users to soils and other site data that was previously available through hardcopies of county soil surveys that were published by the USDA Soil Conservation Service, which was the fore-runner of today's NRCS.

Getting started with Web Soil Survey:

As with most web-based programs, the easiest and best way to learn how to use Web Soil Survey is to open the program and explore its features through some trial and error. Before jumping into WSS, however, below are a few basics to get you started with the Web Soil Survey tool. For our example, we'll look at soil properties for a section of the MSU Forestry Tree Research Center near East Lansing.

Once you land on the WSS homepage, the first step is to click on the green circle button "Start WSS" in upper right. This will launch the program and take you to the next web page. From this page you can identify a location of interest to you. The easiest way to find a location is by entering the address under the "Quick Navigation" tab. Alternatively, you can zero in on specific areas on the WSS map using the zoom feature.

Once you have found your desired field, you will need to create an area of interest (AOI). An AOI can be created

Photo 1 – A thorough site assessment is essential for a successful tree rotation.

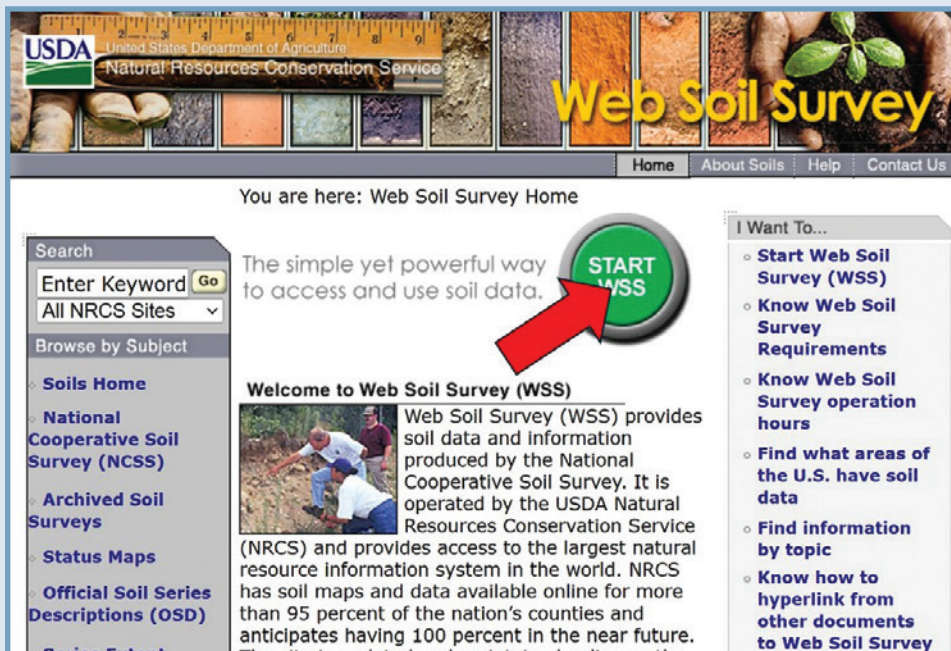


Image 2 – Launch the Web Soil Survey Program by clicking on the START WSS button.

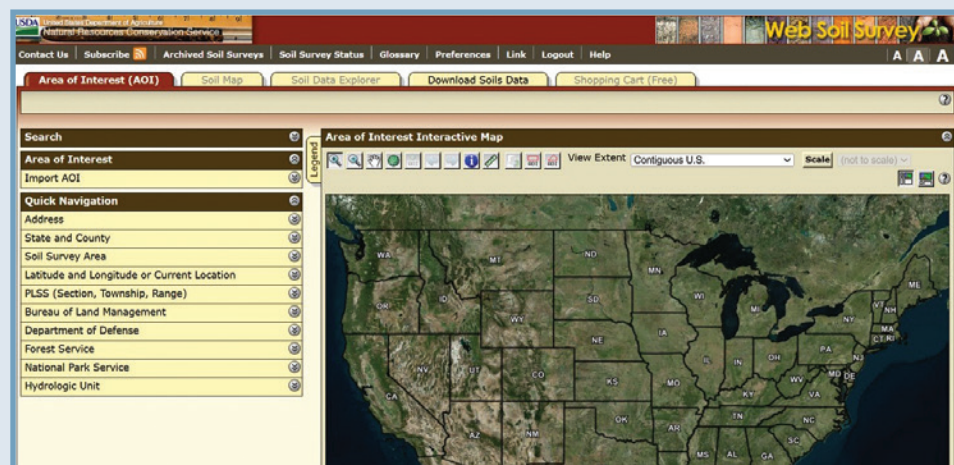


Image 3 – The opening window of the Web Soil Survey.

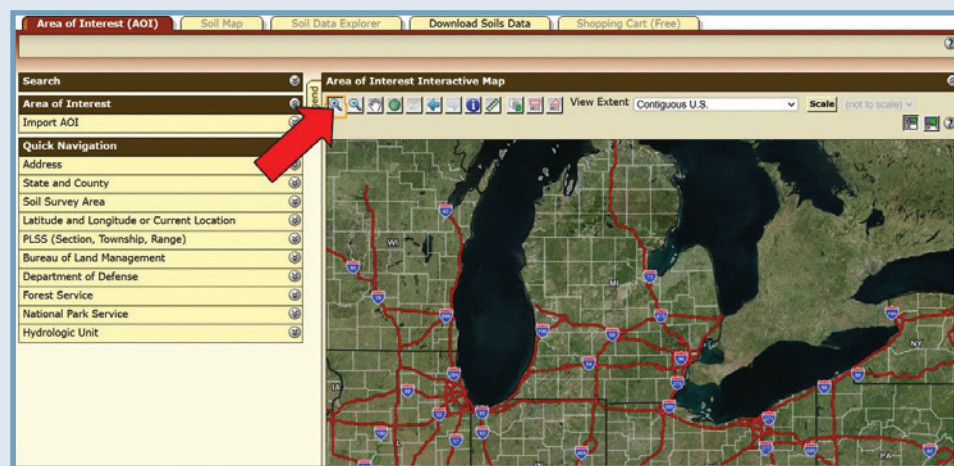


Image 4 – Using the Zoom feature of WSS to find a specific property.

by selecting either the “define AOI” rectangle or polygon shapes, which are near the top of the interactive map. To finish the AOI using a polygon shape tool, double click when the area is delineated.

Once you have delineated your AOI, click on the “soil map” tab. Web Soil Survey will display a map indicating the soil types within the area of interest (screenshot). Each soil type within the AOI will be indicated by an

abbreviation. To the left of the map, the program will display a legend that provides the name of the soil series associated with each abbreviation and the area in each soil type in acres and as a percentage of the total area in the AOI.

Clicking on the soils series description in the legend opens a menu that provides important site and soils information that can be extremely useful in key decisions for Christmas tree operations.

Map Unit Setting – this is general information about the site including climatic data such as mean precipitation and temperature. In many cases, a grower will already know much of this information, but it can be useful if considering lease or purchase of a distant tract.

Setting – describes the general landform such as moraine or outwash and parent material of the soil.

Typical profile – this provides the soil texture class of the various soil horizons. This is a powerful feature of WSS as it allows growers to know if the soil on a site is loamy, sandy, or heavy clay without ever setting foot on the site and taking a soil sample.

Properties and qualities – This section provides further critical information for making decisions for a Christmas tree operation. Growers should pay particular attention to Drainage class. In WSS Drainage class is listed using descriptive terms such as excessively drained, well drained, moderately well drained, poorly drained, or very poorly drained. Other key properties that growers should note are Frequency of flooding and Frequency of ponding. Frequency of flooding refers to large-scale inundation due to events such as overflowing streams. Frequency of ponding refers to smaller-scale inundation due to poor drainage following precipitation or snow melt. Sites that are identified as having periodic ponding/flooding or are described as poorly drained are ‘red flags’ for growers considering growing

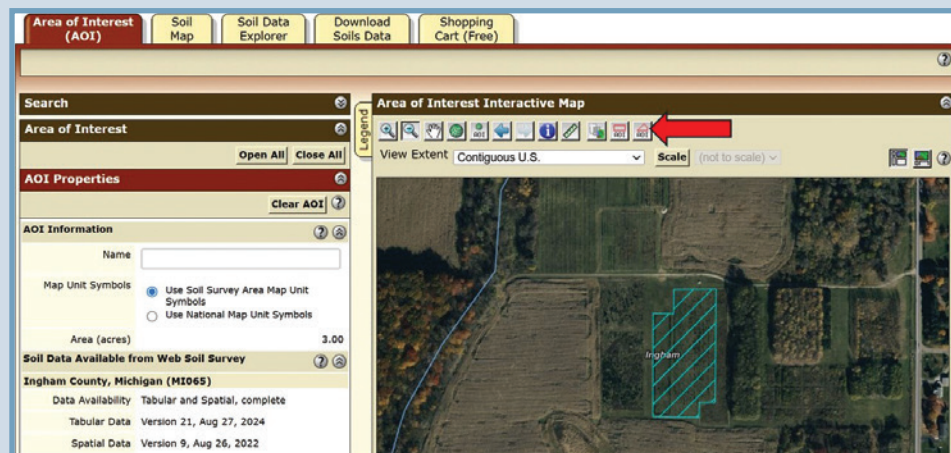


Image 5 – Delineating an irregular-shaped Area of Interest (AOI) with the AOI polygon feature.

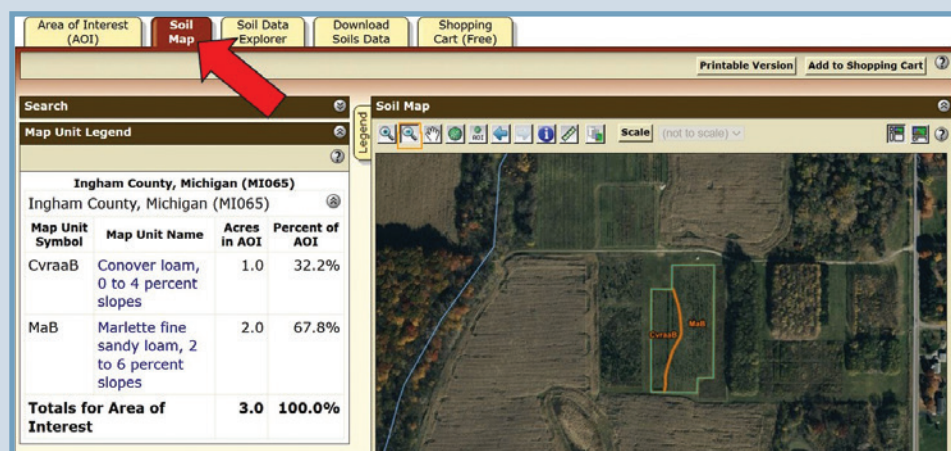


Image 6 – Using the Soil Map feature to identify the soil types within an Area of Interest.

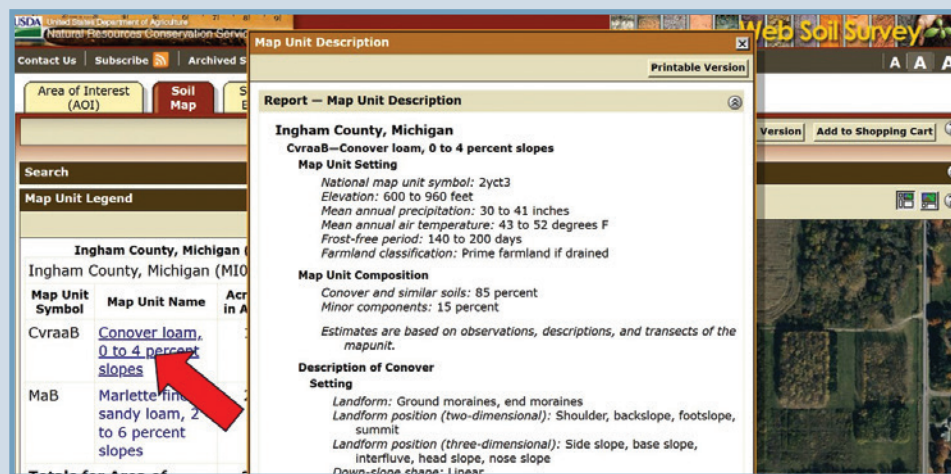


Image 7 – Clicking on the soil type (Map Unit Name) opens a window provides details on the soil and site characteristics for that soil type.

species that are intolerant of 'wet feet,' especially Fraser fir. Such sites will be highly conducive to phytophthora root rot, which can devastate Fraser fir plantings.

It is important to note that drainage class and frequency of ponding are often related to subsurface soil features and may not be related to surface soil texture. Producers sometimes erroneously conclude that their site is well-drained because they observe sandy soil at the surface. However, it is possible to have a site with a light textured surface horizon on a poorly drained site. This is an example of the utility of WSS as it provides growers with comprehensive information on site drainage that might not be apparent on a site visit during a dry period in August.

Growers can get additional information on the soil properties on their site by using the Soil Data Explorer tab within Web Soil Survey. While a complete discussion of the information available on the WSS system is beyond the scope of this article, key properties that are of interest to Christmas tree growers can be found under 'Soil Properties and Qualities' and 'Soil Reports.' Under these tabs growers can access information on soil physical properties and soil chemical properties. One important soil physical property which is estimated by WSS is Available Water Capacity (AWC), which indicates the amount of water in the soil profile that is available to plants, expressed as a decimal fraction. For example, if we assume a rooting depth of 10" for young trees and the AWC is 0.10 in/in, that means the soil can hold 1" of water (10" depth $\times$ 0.10 = 1"). This information can be useful in assessing the potential need for irrigation or developing an irrigation schedule. AWC above 0.2 in/in indicates a high

water holding capacity, meaning growers can irrigate less frequently but at higher rates. In contrast, an AWC value below 0.1 indicates a low water holding capacity, indicating growers may need to irrigate more often and at lower rates.

Within the soil chemical properties parameters, WSS provides estimates of Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) and soil pH, both of which are important for managing soil fertility. CEC is largely determined by soil texture – CEC increases with clay fraction – and soil organic matter, which also increases CEC. Soils with relatively high CEC values (i.e., CEC > 20) are able to retain key soil nutrients such as potassium, iron, and magnesium but are more resistant to changes in soil pH. Soil pH (or soil reaction) is a measure of the relative acidity of soil and is critical in determining the availability of key nutrients such as iron and manganese. It is important to note that soil pH is dynamic and changes with past cropping and management, such as fertilization or liming. Therefore, growers should use the soil pH information derived from WSS as a general guideline but should not substitute this information for onsite sampling.

For users that have some training or knowledge of ecology, the information found under the 'Ecological Sites,' can provide some useful insights. For instance, in our example for the Tree Research Center, part of the area is classified as 'Moist Loamy Depression.' In native forests, these areas would be dominated by bottomland species such as silver maple and green ash, which suggests they would be poor sites for Fraser fir. In contrast, other areas are classified as 'Dry Loamy Drift Plains'

which would typically support upland tree species such as white oak and bur oak and may be better suited for trees that require good soil drainage.

Summary

The Web Soil Survey tool produced by the USDA NRCS provides Christmas tree growers with a free, powerful, easy to use on-line program for gaining critical information on soil on their sites. This knowledge can be invaluable in leasing or purchasing decisions and in selecting which species to plant in a given site. In particular, the resource provides assessment of site drainage classes and frequency of ponding or flooding, which are critical limiting factors for some species. The tool can also provide baseline information on key physical and chemical properties that are essential for irrigation decisions and nutrition management. 

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Detailed instructions for how to use WSS can be found at
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soils/getting-started-with-web-soil-survey>



“As an NCTA member, I am part of a dedicated community of Christmas tree growers who share in supporting and advancing the future of the industry, our farms, and future generations of our farms.”

*Scott Powell, President-Elect, NCTA
Dutchman Tree Farms, Manton, MI*

(Pictured with daughter Elisabeth at the Impact Washington Summit)

NCTA is highly focused on the things the industry has said matter most—**public policy/governmental affairs, voice of the industry, White House tree, fire issues and fire codes.**

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ICTA NEWS

Well, we made it through the first weekend of tree sales, and the ever-famous Black Friday. While it's nice to have all that business, after three days, our workers were already getting a little tired. We are open seven days a week, but the weekdays are relatively quiet, and we have some time to restock the shelves before the next weekend and make more wreaths and garland.

I know many of you are only open for a couple of weekends, but we had good tree growth earlier this year, and after finding some pre-cuts, we were able to stay open for four weeks...something we haven't done for several years.

Friday, December 6th, we have the added pleasure of going to the Great Lakes Naval Station to help distribute trees for the Trees for Troops program. While our trees go somewhere else, it's nice to see the joy this program brings to all the young families who may never have had a real tree. When we go, we take a couple of chainsaws to make a fresh cut and some twine to help tie the trees onto the cars, just like we do on our farm. It only takes a few hours and is fun and rewarding. I wish all of you could have the same opportunity.

Our ICTA/Indiana Winter Meeting will take place at the Boone County Fairgrounds in Lebanon, Indiana, January 31st through February 1st. We enjoy seeing other growers and learning about new ways to care for our trees.

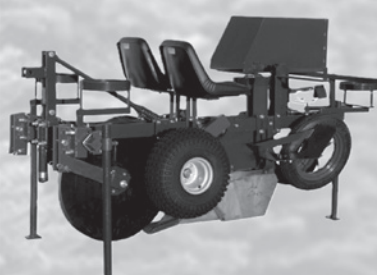
On a personal note, many of you know I've been dealing with prostate cancer that spread to my bones. A few weeks ago, I finished my chemo treatments, and the follow-up PET scan showed no detectable cancer in the bones and lymph nodes. My PSA has gone from a high of 68.7 down to .4. I'll need periodic checks for the rest of my life, but I should gradually get some strength and stamina back. I want to thank everyone for their good thoughts and prayers, and I'll see you at the next meeting. I wish you a good season and a Happy New Year!

ICTA President, Rob Richardson 🌲



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REGIONAL NEWS INDIANA

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GREETINGS FROM INDIANA

Without a doubt, 2024 will be a fast and furious Christmas tree season for Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association members with less than a month between Thanksgiving and Christmas! ICTGA members are working hard to provide beautiful, quality real Christmas trees to families throughout the state. Everyone seems happy to be able to have a real Christmas tree in their home, no matter the size or species.

Trees For Troops

The Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association members donated 130 trees to be delivered by FedEx to over 93 bases and stations located throughout the United States. ICTGA board member Lucas Dull of Dull's Tree Farm served as the Trees for Troops state coordinator for two pickup locations in Indiana. Joe Hensler provided a FedEx pickup location at Hensler Nursery near Hamlet which is in the north central part of the state. Rex and Janice Zenor of Piney Acres Farm at Fortville served as the central Indiana area FedEx pickup location.

In addition to ICTGA members donating trees for the program, several tree farms are collecting donations for the Trees for Troops program. The following ICTGA members donated trees and/or are collecting money during tree sales for the 2024 program. There are other members that collect money and send it directly to the Christmas Spirit Foundation so they may not be listed here. The association thanks all its members for supporting the Trees for Troops program in various ways for so many years.

Farms participating in Trees for Troops 2024 program:

- Birch Island Farm – Rick & Andrea Lux, Waldron
- Bohman Christmas Tree Farm – Doug & Becky Bohman, Greensburg
- Dull's Tree Farm – Tom, Kerry, Lucas & Dana Dull, Thorntown

- Evans Whispering Pines – Joe & Rita Evans, Danville
- Hensler Nursery – Joe Hensler & Scott Heeren, Hamlet
- Jolly Pines Tree Farm – Dustin & Sarah James, West Terre Haute
- Lees Trees – Lee & Alicia Van Vuren, Wheatfield
- Millbrook Tree Farm – Brent & Cara Reed, Yorktown
- Oak Hill Tree Farm – Matt & Rachel Stine, Crawfordsville
- Piney Acres Farm – Rex & Janice Zenor, Fortville
- Potter's the Family Tree – Brian & Debra Potter, Akron
- Sambol's Tree Farm – Lance & Susan Sambol, Fortville
- St. Joe Christmas Tree Farm – Mike & Judy Reifenberg, Fort Wayne
- Sugar Ridge Pines – Doug & Annette Ream, Centerpoint
- Woliung's Farm – Steve & Kathy Woliung, Aurora

Indiana Statehouse Christmas Tree Program

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! On Tuesday, December 3rd, 2024, members of the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association presented Statehouse officials with real Christmas trees. The annual program places fresh, Indiana grown trees in the Capitol rotunda, the Governor's office and residence, and several other department offices. This year, fourteen trees were donated by twelve Indiana Christmas tree farms.

Participating farms with Statehouse tree locations:

- Governor's Office – Dull's Tree Farm, Thorntown, Boone County
- Governor's Residence – Birch Island Farm, Waldron, Shelby County
- Statehouse Rotunda – Bohman Christmas Tree Farm, Greensburg, Decatur County

- Lt. Governor's Office – Sambol's Tree Farm, Fortville, Hancock County
- Department of Education – Millbrook Tree Farm, Yorktown, Delaware County
- State Treasurer – Oak Hill Tree Farm, Crawfordsville, Montgomery County
- State Auditor – Sugar Ridge Pines, Centerpoint, Clay County
- Secretary of State – St. Joe's Tree Farm, Fort Wayne, Allen County
- State Attorney General – Oak Hill Tree Farm, Crawfordsville, Montgomery County
- Department of Agriculture – Dull's Tree Farm, Thorntown, Boone County
- Department of Natural Resources – Yakey Tree Farm, Fishers, Hamilton County
- Department of Forestry – Cassens Trees, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County
- Government Building (1st)– Lee's Trees, Wheatfield, Jasper County
- Government Building (2nd)– Lee's Trees, Wheatfield, Jasper County

This year marks the 65th year that Indiana Christmas tree growers have brought Christmas trees to the Statehouse. To find a Christmas tree farm near you or to learn more about the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association, visit our website at www.indianachristmastrees.com.

2025 Winter Meeting Save the Date

Mark your calendars! The Indiana/Illinois annual Winter meeting will be held on Friday, January 31st and Saturday, February 1st at the Boone County Fairgrounds in Lebanon, Indiana.

We are so excited for this meeting as we have a stellar line-up of speakers this year. Please visit our website to download, print, and send a completed registration to attend this event. We are able to host multiple experts in the field of Christmas Trees this year, discussing topics such as: funding from the FSA (USDA), insurance core essentials for a Christmas Tree Farm, weed control, and a variety of others! This is also a wonderful time to learn from each other with plenty of round-table discussions and time to visit with fellow farmers.

We look forward to seeing everyone soon!

Mike & Liz Walsh, ICTGA Secretary-Treasurer 🌲



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NEWS FROM IOWA

President's Message

Well, as of this writing most of us have completed our first weekend of selling our trees and associated products for the 2024 season. For us in Iowa it was certainly one of the coldest Black Friday weekends in many years, but it didn't seem to slow down our customers. From what I am hearing sales are up, but we are not sure how much the late Thanksgiving has contributed to higher early in the season sales.

Again, the demand for 10 ft plus trees continues to be very high. Holding back more trees to reach 10-12 ft will clearly improve profitability and attract another group of customers.

Iowa weather was generally good for growing trees except for the extreme dry months of August, September, and October in many parts of the state.

Once again, be prepared to mulch and water your new seedlings this coming spring.

Christmas Trees to the Capital Building

November 22, 2024, Mike White, Reid Bermel and the team delivered 4 trees on behalf of the Iowa Christmas Tree Growers Association to the capital building including the atrium and the Governor's office and the Wallace Agricultural building. The trees are all donated by Iowa Christmas Tree Growers Association Tree farms from all over the state. This was Mike White's 24th year of donating trees. 🌲



REGIONAL NEWS IOWA



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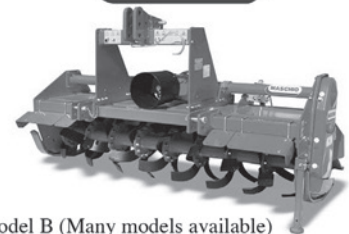


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WELCOME

to the
**Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal,
Kentucky Christmas Tree Association!**

We're thrilled to have you join us and expand our journal's reach. It's great to see another association recognize the value of our publication and provide it as a member benefit!

GREETINGS FROM KENTUCKY!

The 2025 Kentucky Christmas Tree Association spring meeting is set for Saturday, April 12 at the Fayette County Extension Office. The plant auction begins at 9 am EST with lunch and meeting scheduled to follow. The plant auction is the only fundraiser that KCTA conducts for the year with funds used to support college scholarships. We provided two scholarships to University of Kentucky forestry students this year with Makaslyn Dunham and Janson Ison being the recipients. We need KCTA members to assist at the auction with registration, bid documentation, receiving payment and assisting with load out. Members are welcome and encouraged to purchase plant material as well.

Just a reminder how the auction works. KCTA members bring plant material (trees, shrubs, flowers, hanging baskets, etc) to the auction. 50% of the proceeds goes to the donor and 50% is donated to KCTA. The auction is open to the public and promoted to enhance the attendance. This is a great opportunity to promote some of our local growers such as FFA greenhouses. We invite all KCTA members to come and be a part of this event and participate in the meeting to follow.

The address for the Fayette County Extension Office is 1140 Harry Sykes Way, Lexington KY 40504.

Kenney Gulley, Vice-President



The advertisement features a collection of products from Fraser Knoll. On the left, there is shearing equipment including a chainsaw and a trimmer. Next to it are clamp-type wreath frames and machines, showing a completed wreath. In the center, there are shakers and other equipment, including a red shaker unit. To the right, there are stands for Cinco, Yule Tree, and Gunnard, along with polyurethane balers and netting. At the bottom right, there is a bottle of colorant.

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2024 KCTA Scholarship Recipients:

Makaslyn Dunham:

Makaslyn is a senior majoring in Forestry with a Sustainable Agriculture minor. She came to the University of Kentucky from northeast Florida but was influenced heavily by her family history of logging and tree farming in central Wisconsin. In the Bluegrass region, she hopes to find innovative ways to integrate agricultural economics into forestry systems to make sustainable active forest management accessible to owners of smaller tracts of forest land.

Janson Ison:

Janson is a senior at the University of Kentucky with double majors in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and Forestry. He is from Vine Grove KY and finds fulfillment in outdoor activities such as hunting, hiking, and fishing. Additionally, he takes great pleasure in taking part in the Christian community found at the University of Kentucky Baptist Campus Ministry through worship, Bible studies, community service and discipleship. After college, he hopes to pursue a career in forestry alongside ministry within the local church.

New KCTA Rack Card

The Kentucky Horticulture Council has a new rack card they will be distributing to promote KCTA at various events across the state with prospective farms. 🌲



WHO ARE WE

THE KENTUCKY CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION EXISTS TO PROMOTE THE CHRISTMAS TREE INDUSTRY IN OUR STATE. WE FOCUS ON MARKET PROMOTION, BUT ALSO STRIVE TO PROVIDE LEARNING AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN SUCCESSFUL PRODUCTION PRACTICES AMONG OUR LOCAL FARMS. MEMBER FARMS ARE OPEN TO SHARING INFORMATION TO AID THOSE THINKING ABOUT JOINING OUR INDUSTRY.

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All stacked ready to go

GREETINGS FROM MARYLAND!

President's Note

Another tree season has arrived. Hopefully it has been a very successful year for you. I want to thank everyone for supporting me during the time I have been the President. It has been a

blessing and an honor to have been involved with MCTA not only in this position, but during the years I have been a member.

Mehrl Mayne, President

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Note from the New Board

As anyone reading this journal knows, November and December are hectic times on the farm. We all wear many hats as tree growers – farmer, manager, troubleshooter, salesperson, repairman, etc. In addition, some brave souls are willing to take on the task of helping their state associations.

MCTA wants to take this opportunity to thank Mehrl Mayne for his four years of service as president of the association.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the Winter meeting to be held once again at the Hereford Fire Department in Monkton, Md., on February 22, 2025.

Our new president, Charles Cawley, will take office at the Winter meeting. 🌲



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Farm owners Jesse Steadman & Jamie Aspenson discuss deer management challenges with attendees during a tour of their operation in September 2024, Taproot Tree Farm, Stow, MA. Photo Credit: Sara Davagian

MASSACHUSETTS WINTER 2025 UPDATE

Farm Tour at Taproot Tree Farm

The last farm tour of our 2024 meeting series took place at **Taproot Tree Farm** in Stow, MA. Despite the rain we had a great turnout of members from across the state. Farm owners **Jesse Steadman & Jamie Aspenson** were excited to share their unique experiences growing Christmas trees on conservation land leased from the town. While they both have backgrounds in agriculture, it was only last year that they left other careers to focus on farming full time. They're now approaching their fourth selling season and had a lot to share about what they've learned in a relatively short period of time.

While they've experienced many of the same obstacles other growers face, such as deer management, pest and weed control, and ability to irrigate, farming on leased conservation land presented unique challenges in how they can address these issues. They discussed deer management at length, as it's been a significant challenge at this location. After experimenting with various strategies, they ultimately resorted to installing a high fence perimeter around the property. They also discussed weed management without the use of pesticides, which they are not allowed to use based on their lease agreement. They shared basal pruning and mowing techniques they use to help keep weeds at bay without the use of chemicals. Close tree spacing also helps to control weeds but presents its own challenges as trees mature and get larger.

Jesse and Jamie also discussed the struggles they've had with growing different varieties of trees, and how much soil and growing conditions can vary within the relatively small acreage of farm. This has resulted in very different survival and growth rates depending on the variety of trees and where they have been planted. Some species have thrived in some areas and struggled in others. Attendees suggested some of this may be due to the fact that corn was previously grown on portions of the land, and the soil pH likely needs to be adjusted to better suit Christmas trees. The owners plan to do further soil testing and are experimenting with matching different species to varying soil conditions on their farm.

2024 "Green Friday" Ceremony

Taproot Tree Farm also had the honor of hosting the 2024 Green Friday ceremony, officially opening the 2024 Christmas tree season. Gov. Maura Healey declared Friday, Nov. 29 as "Green Friday" and State Agricultural Commissioner Ashley Randle celebrated the declaration with the ceremonial cutting of a Christmas tree which will be donated to a local family in need. Consumers in Massachusetts were encouraged to buy their Christmas tree and holiday plants from local growers and nurseries and show their support for MassGrown products. The sales of locally grown Christmas trees generate more than \$4.5 million for the state's economy each year, as well as bringing enormous environmental benefits to the land they're grown on.



Jamie Aspenson (left) of Taproot Tree Farm & MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle (right) with the ceremonial Green Friday Christmas tree, Stow, MA. Photo Credit: Rick LeBlanc

2024 Sales Season

On the Monday after Thanksgiving the board hosted the annual virtual roundtable so members could debrief, share experiences and discuss trends they saw on opening weekend.

- Most growers were happy to have another three days of clear weather this year. Some growers in western MA reported snow for opening weekend, but it didn't appear to impact sales.
- Farms reported sales were up for the Thanksgiving weekend and Friday was a very busy day. Customers were eager to get their tree as soon as possible with Thanksgiving being so late this year. Several farms have already sold out of trees and are closed for the season after just one weekend.
- Many also reported increasing tree prices this year. Operating and labor costs continue to rise, and most customers understand (and almost expect) higher prices.
- Sourcing and marketing quality pre-cut trees continues to be a challenge. Some growers no longer offer pre-cuts while others find they can easily sell pre-cuts trees in varieties and sizes not available in their fields.
- Growers are also continuously coming up with ways to improve the customer experience and make their farm a unique destination. Some of the activities they offered to attract and retain customers included: wagon rides, photo ops, food trucks, live music, Santa visits and other kid's activities.

Whether you were open for just a day or two, or right up until Christmas, we hope everyone had a successful selling season & some well-deserved rest after the holidays.

Big E Results

The 2024 Big E Agricultural Fair took place September 13th - September 29th and Massachusetts was well represented in the Christmas tree and wreath competitions. We had great participation across the New England states, nearly doubling the number of trees entered last year. Congratulations to **Cranston's Tree Farm** who took home 3 ribbons including 1st place in the pine and fir categories, as well as Grand Champion, Massachusetts State Champion and Reserve Champion! **Seekonk Tree Farm** also took home 3 ribbons including 1st place in the spruce category and Reserve Champion. **Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm** took home 3 ribbons, **Coward Farms** took home 2, and

Crane Hill Tree Farm and **Davagian Tree Farm** each took home 1 ribbon. **Davagian Tree Farm** also took home 3 ribbons in the wreath competition, including 1st place in both the decorated and undecorated categories. Congratulations to all participants!



Christmas tree and wreath entries being set up at the 2024 Big E exhibit, West Springfield, MA. Photo Credit: Peter Sweet, Jr.

2025 Meeting Series

The board will begin planning for the 2025 meeting series this winter. We strive to plan meetings with speakers and learning opportunities that are valuable to our members and we're always looking for input or ideas for agenda topics, guest speakers, and vendors. What topics would you like to see discussed at future meetings? If you have suggestions or are willing to host a meeting at your farm, please send an e-mail expressing interest to our Meeting & Events Director Pete Sweet, Jr. at petersweetjr@yahoo.com. 🌲

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REGIONAL NEWS MICHIGAN

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Thank you to Wahmhoff Farms Nursery for providing the tree to the Governor's Residence

HAPPY NEW YEAR, MICHIGAN MEMBERS!

Get ready for a fantastic year of learning and networking. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for the following 2025 meetings:

- **MCTA Winter Meeting:** Friday, February 28, 2025, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Rapids Airport. We've got an impressive lineup of expert speakers and engaging sessions.
- **National Summer Meeting:** July 24-26, 2025, at the stunning Dutchman Tree Farms. Dutchman Tree Farms and their Northern Pines Nursery do it all. Come and network with industry leaders, learn from experts in the business, and discover the latest innovations in tree farming. Don't miss out! Book your hotel room for the Summer Meeting soon, as rooms are filling up quickly.

Amy Start, Executive Director

Governor's Residence Looking Festive

Thank you to Wahmhoff Farms Nursery reserved grand champion of the 2024 MCTA Tree Contest, for providing the tree to the Governor's Residence.

Thank you to Korson's Tree Farms, winner of the 2024 MCTA Wreath Contest, for providing wreaths to the Governor's Residence.



Governor Whitmer feeling festive.

Digging Into All Things Christmas Tree:

Addressing Challenges and Opportunities

Michigan Christmas Tree Association **WINTER MEETING**

Friday, February 28, 2025

DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Rapids Airport

4747 28th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512

The Michigan Christmas Tree Association Winter Meeting titled "Digging into all things Christmas Tree: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities" will be held, Friday, February 28, 2025. This event will provide growers with in-depth information on an array of topics including; understanding and improving soil properties, updates on pesticide label laws, effective disease management strategies, current marketing trends, and new grower sessions. Attendees can expect to leave the meeting equipped with valuable knowledge and practical advice to help them overcome industry challenges and maximize their success in the Christmas tree business.



FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.MCTA.ORG

Michigan Farms Spread Joy this Christmas Through Trees for Troops

Michigan Christmas tree growers helped spread some joy again this holiday season by providing real Christmas trees to military



Wahmhoff Farms Nursery providing real Christmas trees to the military

families through Trees for Troops. This year, more than 1000 trees were donated by Michigan farms! Many thanks to Dutchman Tree Farms, Tannenbaum Farms, and Wahmhoff Farms Nursey for hosting the FedEx tree pick-up locations. Thank you to all the generous Michigan growers who donated Christmas trees to the program this year: Armintrout's West Michigan Farms, Badger Evergreen Nursery, Circle B Tree Farm, Dutchman Tree Farms, Janke Tree Farm, Korson's Tree Farms, Smith's Christmas Tree Farm, Tannenbaum Farms, and Wahmhoff Farms Nursery. What a generous way to spread holiday joy and honor those who protect and serve our country!



Dutchman Tree Farms loading yard supplied trees for Trees for Troops



Gathering trees for transport at Tannenbaum Farms

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GO GREEN

GO WHITE

We appreciate your continued support of the MCTA Research Fund! Donate in 2025 when renewing your dues.

THANK YOU 2024 RESEARCH DONORS!

Thank you to all the member farms that donated to the MCTA Research Fund. To those who donated a \$100 **GO GREEN!**, and to those who donated \$250 or more we say **GO WHITE!**

\$100 GO GREEN!

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The Journal features updates on research projects funded by the MCTA Research Fund. Want to donate to the MCTA Research Fund? Checks can be made out to the Michigan Christmas Tree Association (and mark in the memo line: MCTA Research Fund).

By working together, our industry continues to grow!

REGIONAL NEWS MINNESOTA

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MN Commissioner of Agriculture Thom Petersen, Governor Tim Walz, First Lady Gwen Walz and Baden Hilty, Tony Bacon and Kenny Olson of Happy Land Tree Farms.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

As I sit down to write this on Thanksgiving morning, it is a mere 20°F outside, but a light blanket of snow covers our ground creating a beautiful setting to celebrate the day with family. Meanwhile, many of you are focused on restocking tree and wreath racks or preparing for your opening day. Your hustle and bustle will all be over by the time you read this, so I hope you all had a prosperous season, filled with many memories (good & bad) from new and old customers.

The weather in Minnesota can be very challenging at times, however, the abundance of rain this spring, combined with a fairly dry summer has allowed for the best tree growing in years. This has helped to pull us out of the drought we've been suffering the last several years.

The MNCTA, along with the MN Grown Program (a statewide partnership between the MN Dept. of Ag and MN Producers of specialty crops & livestock), had a surplus in funds this year and chose to put the money toward a promotion campaign for real Christmas trees. After brainstorming and research, two social media influencers were hired to visit two of our member farms. In a mere 4 days, the two Instagram posts have already received over 600 actions. The goal is to promote live trees for Christmas and to direct viewers to our list of Minnesota Christmas Tree growers on the MN Grown website.

Ann Marie Theien, MNCTA Executive Director

Special Recognition

The MNCTA would like to give a special recognition to three of our member farms as they opened their tree farms to the public for the first time since they began growing Christmas trees. Evergreen Hill Farm in Cottage Grove, Juno's Tree Farm in Rushmore and Kavan Family Christmas Tree Farm in Lino Lakes. Congratulations to all of you and we hope that your labors of love paid off this season and will continue for many years to come.

Minnesota Capital Tree

The Olson Family of Happy Land Tree Farm in Sandstone has specialized in growing high quality balled and burlapped nursery trees as well as continued to be a part of the Christmas Tree business for over 40 years. The family takes great pride in growing beautiful Christmas trees, as well as participating in the MN State Fair Tree Contest every year. Their award-winning trees have gained them titles of Grand Champion, Reserve Grand Champion and Sweepstakes over a span of 22 years. For the fourth year in a row, Happy Land Tree Farm received the Grand Champion title in 2024. With this title, comes the great honor of providing a Christmas Tree to be on display in the MN Capital in St. Paul.



The 18' Balsam fir proudly stands tall in the MN Capital. Photo credit: MN Dept of Agriculture.



Grounds crew and Happy Land Tree Farm members carry the 18' Balsam fir tree into the MN Capital. Photo credit: MN Dept of Agriculture.



Happy Land Tree Farms is honored to deliver the tree to the MN Capital. Photo credit: MN Dept of Agriculture.

Christmas Tree at Minnesota Governor's Mansion

Turck's Trees in Litchfield has been creating Christmas memories for families for almost four decades, planting their first crop in 1981 and selling their first trees in 1987. The farm has been participating in the MN State Fair Tree Contest for over 20 years and for the first time ever, the farm's 8.5 foot Cannan Fir tree earned the title, Reserve Grand Champion in 2024. Receiving this title also gives them the honor of supplying Christmas trees to the MN Governor's residence. Four trees were requested by the Governor's office – one to be decorated in the living room and three for outside display. The Turck family was greeted by Governor Tim Walz and First Lady Gwen Walz upon their arrival.



The Canaan fir tree is adorned with lights in the living room of the Governor's residence.



MN Governor, Tim Walz and First Lady Gwen Walz pose for a picture with Jean and Jesse Turck of Turck's Trees

Trees For Troops

Minnesota takes pride in providing Christmas trees to the families of our United States armed forces members both in the United States and overseas. This year, we will have ten of our member farms donate over 180 trees to be sent to military families. FedEx will pick up our Minnesota grown trees on December 9th at the Rum River Tree Farm, in Oak Grove. This is our way of being able to say 'thank you' to the men and women who protect our freedom.



2025 Upcoming Conventions

Annual Winter Convention (February 28th - March 1st) – will be held at the Holiday Inn and Suites in St. Cloud once again. This space not only allows us to hold a professional meeting with presentations, demonstrations and breakout sessions, but it is also a superb hotel for families. With two pools, three hot tubs, game rooms, a children's activity center, full indoor volleyball court and two indoor half basketball courts, the family will never get bored. In 2024, we also provided a hands-on learning experience for the children while parents attended the meeting. Stayed tuned as this may be an option again this year.

Annual Summer Convention (September 12th – 13th) – will be hosted by the Guggisberg family at the Guggisberg Tree Farm in New Ulm. Guggisberg Tree Farm is a family run business that has been growing trees since 1995. This will be our first visit to the farm, so please show them our MNCTA love by attending. There is talk of the return of the Tree Farmer Olympics again as it was a huge success in 2024!

New Board Members

We had the pleasure of welcoming two new Board Members this past September, Kevin Wilson and Paul Saunders. Kevin is the proud owner of Maple Leaf Farms in Cokato. He brings his enthusiasm of our association to the Board and plans to begin recreating a recruiting and welcoming committee for new members. Paul, owner of Crow River Nursery in Howard Lake, has been in the tree business for 41 years. In October, Paul was also voted in as the new Vice President of MNCTA. Along with normal VP responsibilities, Paul has also been actively involved in the creation of our new website, which will be launched around the first of the year.

REGIONAL NEWS MISSOURI

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Becky and Jerry Riley from Roots Christmas Tree Farm catch a visitor on one of their trees

MISSOURI REGIONAL NEWS WINTER 2024

The Governor's Christmas Tree

The 2024 MCTA Christmas tree and wreath contest concluded in September. There was a tie for first place between Lloyd's Family Farm and last year's winner, Pea Ridge Forest. Our new winner, Floyd's Family Farm is located in Ashland, MO. Owned and operated by members Zach and Erin Diederich, their beautiful farm has a history dating back to 1877. One or both of the trees will be placed in the Governor's mansion for the holiday season. The winning wreath was produced by last year's champion, Pea Ridge Forest. Congratulations to our winners!



Winners from the annual tree and wreath contest

Preparing for the Season

Missouri had a very wet spring, but battled drought conditions in late summer and early fall. Despite the weather challenges, our experienced and new growers pressed ahead to deliver quality trees for our customers. We'd like to highlight Tinsel Ridge Christmas Tree Farm located in Holt, Missouri. Angela and Brent Stephenson are new growers and have gotten off to a great start. We look forward to their progress and contributions to the MCTA!



Tinsel Ridge Christmas Tree Farm



Ann Harmon from Starr Pines creating a wreath

Upcoming Winter Meeting

The MCTA winter meeting will be held on 18 January at the Missouri Conservation Credit Union conference room. Information about the upcoming meeting can be found on the association's website: <https://missourichristmastrees.org>

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE NORTHEAST!

It has been happy so far, indeed, as many Christmas tree farmers have experienced favorable weather conditions that have made for an excellent harvest season. Despite an optimistic outlook for many of us this harvest season, others are facing drought conditions that may have an impact on the longevity of pre-cut trees. Higher-elevation areas have seen higher rainfall and harder frosts, while lower elevations seem to be less fortunate. To mediate the impact of these drought conditions, we're encouraging farmers and retailers to remind consumers to

be extra vigilant about keeping their tree well-watered and away from sources of heat. In recent years, the Christmas tree market has struggled to meet rising consumer demand. However, the tide is turning, as the supply of Christmas trees appears to be catching up with demand. This year, the market is seeing a healthy balance of supply and demand, with many growers able to meet consumer needs without the major shortages that plagued previous seasons. While some regions may still see localized shortages due to supply chain disruptions, overall



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retailers seem to be able to find the trees they need.

Despite the positive outlook for domestic tree production, the industry is grappling with concerns over tariffs, particularly regarding imported trees and greens from Canada. Historically, the U.S. has relied on Canada for a significant portion of its Christmas tree supply. In fact, approximately 30% of the Christmas trees sold in the U.S. come from Canadian farms, especially those in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. However, recent tariff policies have sparked concerns among U.S. importers and Canadian tree producers. Tariffs imposed on Canadian trees will lead to higher costs for U.S. distributors, which will ultimately affect the price of trees at retail locations. While the full impact of these tariffs remains to be seen, many in the industry are worried about the potential for increased prices and disrupted supply chains, particularly if trade negotiations do not result in favorable terms for the industry.

For Canadian growers, the tariffs represent a significant challenge, as they affect their ability to remain competitive in the U.S. market. Some Canadian farms are already anticipating feeling the strain, with reports indicating that smaller producers may struggle to absorb the additional costs. Meanwhile, U.S. consumers could face higher prices, or worse, a reduced selection of imported trees.

As the holiday season unfolds, the Christmas tree industry finds itself in a moment of transition. The tree supply is on the upward swing, and the industry is catching up with consumer demand after years of shortages. However, the shadow of tariffs on Canadian imports remains a concern, with retailers and growers keeping a close eye on how these trade policies evolve.

Still, the outlook for the Christmas tree market is largely positive, with an adequate supply of quality trees available for consumers.

Travis Drexler, President, CTFNY

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* Limited crop			
2-1 / P+1	8 - 14"	1.75	1.25
2-2 / P+2	10 - 18"	2.50	1.95
Abies balsamea phanerolepis ~ Cnaan Fir			
* Limited crop			
2-1 / P+1	10 - 15"	1.85	1.65
P+2	10 - 18"	2.50	2.00
(1000+ Inquire)			
Abies concolor ~ Concolor Fir			
* Limited crop			
2-0 / 3-0	12 - 18"	1.25	0.95
3-1 / P+1	8 - 14"	2.00	1.75
2-2	12 - 18"	2.25	1.95
Abies fraseri ~ Fraser Fir			
* Limited crop			
3-0	9 - 12"	0.95	0.75
3-1 / P+1	8 - 14"	1.65	1.45
3-2 / P+2	10 - 18"	2.25	1.95
(1000+ Inquire)			

Age	Size	100 - 499	500 - 1000
Picea abies ~ Norway Spruce			
3-0	10 - 15"	0.85	0.65
2-1	10 - 16"	1.65	1.45
2-2	15 - 24"	2.25	1.75
(1000+ Inquire)			
Picea glauca ~ White Spruce			
3-0	9 - 15"	0.95	0.70
2-1 / 2-2	15 - 24"	1.95	1.75
Picea pungens "Glaucia" ~ Colorado Blue Spruce			
3-0	9 - 15"	0.95	0.70
2-1 / P+1	8 - 14"	1.65	1.45
2-2	16 - 22"	1.85	1.65
(1000+ Inquire)			
Picea omorika ~ Serbian Spruce			
2-2	12 - 16"	1.65	1.45
2-2	16 - 22"	1.95	1.75
Picea glauca "Densata" ~ Black Hills Spruce			
2-2	9-12"	1.65	1.25

Age	Size	100 - 499	500 - 1000
Pinus resinosa ~ Red Pine			
2-0 / 3-0	8 - 14"	0.95	0.75
2-2	8 - 14"	1.75	1.45
2-2	14 - 22"	1.95	1.65
Pinus strobus ~ Eastern White Pine			
3-0	6 - 12"	0.95	0.75
2-1 / 3-1	10 - 16"	1.95	1.75
2-2	14 - 20"	2.25	1.95
Pseudotsuga menziesii ~ Douglas Fir			
3-0	9 - 15"	0.95	0.75
2-2	12 - 16"	1.95	1.75
2-2	15 - 24"	2.25	1.95
Tuja occidentalis ~ American Arborvitae [Eastern White Cedar]			
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2-1 / 3-1	10 - 16"	2.25	1.95

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Military representatives unload the trees donated to Operation Evergreen. Once the trees are inspected, they go through the baler to be packed for shipment overseas.



This year we were pleased to have with us Deborah Ashenhurst Director of Ohio Department of Veterans Services and Brian Baldrige, Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture to assist with the trees being packed.

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GREETINGS FROM THE BUCKEY STATE!

It hard to believe that 2024 is winding down and our growers are in the busy time of year.

The Ohio Christmas Tree Association (OCTA) wrapped up Operation Evergreen. This marks the 29th that we have shipped trees overseas. This year was extra special as members of the military along with FFA members, volunteers, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and the Ohio Department of Veterans Services were on hand to assist with the packing on a cool day in November. Many of the growers that donated trees held events at their farm on Veteran's Day to honor the military/veteran's as well.

While the trees are being delivered, we will continue to accept monetary donations and ornaments as we prepare for our 30th year of Operation Evergreen in 2025.

The OCTA would like to thank Bill Cackler and Matt Mongin for their many years of service to the organization as they have decided to step down as a member of the board of directors. Thanks Bill and Matt for your years of service! OCTA Officers for the upcoming year include:

President: Gary Hite of Scioto Prairie Farms

Vice President: Jeff Greig of Greig Tree Farm

Treasurer: Alan Binger of Hidden Pines Christmas Tree Farm

Secretary: Bev Keener of TimBuk Farms

As we turn the calendar to 2025, dates have been set for the Winter and Summer Meetings. The OCTA Winter Meeting will take place on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at the Quest Center in Columbus. The program is going to be a good one, offering something for all.

June 13-14, 2025 are the dates for the OCTA summer meeting. This year's meeting will be taking us to the northwestern area of the state with Kaleidoscope Farms in Mt Cory serving as the host of the meeting. Watch our website as more details become available.

Happy Holidays,

Valerie Graham, Executive Director 



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Shirley Brennan, Executive Director CTFO, and Alison Clarke-Christmas Tree Lab

AROUND ONTARIO REGION

Mother nature is our silent partner, and this year, everything aligned. We had the right combination of heat and rain, and the trees thrived. Although this year it worked out, we as an industry know this doesn't always happen, and this is why we continue our partnership with the Christmas Tree Lab (christmastreelab.org) at the University of Waterloo around climate change and how it affects Christmas trees. We are excited and look forward to being able to share some of the findings with our members and to work towards seeing the research papers published.

James Somerville attended the Lieutenant Governor's Christmas tree lighting on behalf of the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario and Somerville Nurseries.



Science outside of class!!



Deep discussion!

In November, the CTFO was invited to a two-day agricultural career and educational event for Grades 7-12. Over the two days, we were able to talk to more than 1200 students. Every 10 minutes, a new group of students came by the booth to interact with Shirley Brennan. We were excited and pleased to have Joe Wareham from Chickadee Christmas Tree Farm and Alison Clarke from the Christmas Tree Lab help out with this event. This year, Shirley Brennan put together Christmas Tree Farming Jeopardy and challenged the students to answer the questions in categories of Planting, Harvesting/Marketing, Soil/Environment, Careers, and the last category was Christmas. The students were very engaged, and the top-scoring classes earned a pizza party. As you can see from the pictures, this was thought-provoking and very informative. Although most of the kids attending do not have a Christmas Tree Farm, it was a great forum to educate kids on farming practices and other affiliated careers. At the end of the day, when the students were recapping their learning, there were a lot of comments and interest in tree farming. We are looking forward to partnering more with AgScapes to bring agriculture into the classrooms.

Last November, the Federal Government released a plan to remove HST from Christmas trees starting on Dec. 14th. Unfortunately, this was a logistical nightmare for our farms, and



Learning at its finest!



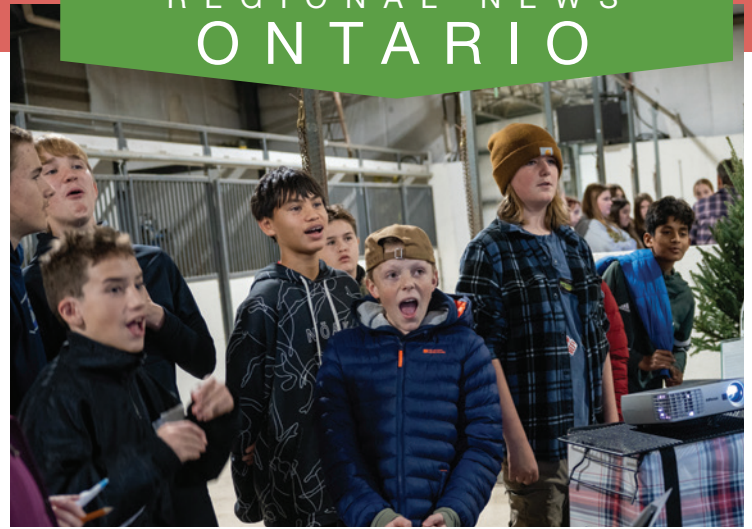
Students are engaged, challenged to be the top scoring class!

did not show support for the farmers. The idea was to help people struggling and give them savings during the season however, it was announced without consultation with the industry and was so late in the season that farmers were left scrambling. Farms offering gifts and concession stands had items that were also included in the plan, and it did take some time to get clarification on what was exempt and what was not. Our farms always want to make sure everyone can get a "Real" tree. However, this new idea from the government needed to be

better explained and thought out so it was beneficial to everyone involved.

Our message this year is about Christmas Tree Farming and sustainable farming practices. Having a message around this allows us as an industry to educate the public and encourage the younger generation to consider Christmas Tree Farming.

*Submitted by
Shirley Brennan, Executive Director* 🌲



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NEWS UPDATE FROM PENNSYLVANIA

New Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association Committee to Focus on Membership

It is an often-repeated question. How does an association balance attracting new members with keeping its current members? There are many factors that impact the answer(s), and the answer(s) is different from association to association and from year to year. The economy influences budgets and whether a farm wants to afford paying membership dues. An association's programming and membership services influences whether a Christmas tree grower sees value in becoming a member. And accurate contact information directly impacts how and whether an association can reach potential members and keep its current members informed.

To tackle these issues in Pennsylvania, the PCTGA formed a new committee dedicated to increasing its membership and assuring its existing growers understand the value of membership. The PCTGA is already blessed with a robust membership roster, but there is always room for improvement and the association hopes to do so by finding new and creative ways to reach the small to medium sized growers who are not yet taking advantage of PCTGA membership including, but not limited to, a listing on the PCTGA website (a go-to resource for people looking for Christmas trees in their area), networking and educational opportunities, informative and unique pesticide CE courses, and the promotion of the industry as a whole. To find out more about how a great association is making itself even better, email the PCTGA's executive director, Aaron Grau at aaron@christmastrees.org.

The 2025 Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association Winter Meeting May Be its Most Robust Gathering Yet

The PCTGA will host its 2025 Winter Meeting at the Wyndham Garden-State College in Boalsburg, PA on February 6th and 7th.

The agenda this year is packed with informative and meaningful lectures and continuing education courses. Among the experts presenting at the 2025 gathering are Dr. Richard Cowles, a scientist with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Dr. Bert Cregg, a professor of horticulture at Michigan State University, and Pennsylvania's own Dr. Rick Bates, a horticulture professor from the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences. Their topics run the gamut from a discussion of Armored Scale Biology & Management to Managing Cone Formation in Fraser Firs to how Climate Change is impacting the Christmas tree industry.

If you'd like to know more about the PCTGA's 2025 Winter Meeting and how you can register to attend, visit the PCTGA website at www.christmastrees.org/the-pctga-winter-meeting.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show is January 4th through the 11th 2025

The Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center in Harrisburg, PA will host the Commonwealth's 109th Farm show from January 4th through the 11th. The PCTGA always makes its presence known at the Farm Show and this year will be no exception. It's an incredible opportunity to educate the public about what it takes to grow a Christmas tree and why real trees are such a special part of the holiday season.

The association produced a video that shows the steps of growing a Christmas tree from seed to harvest. Kids visiting the PCTGA's display are treated to snow from a snow machine hung from the ceiling and coloring books about the Christmas season. Visitors can vote on what tree they think is best in show and most importantly learn about one of Pennsylvania's most treasured crops – Christmas trees! To find out more about the Pennsylvania Farm Show, visit <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/farmshow/pa-farm-show.html>. 🌲

PENNSYLVANIA
CHRISTMAS TREE
GROWERS
ASSOCIATION



Save *the* Date

Winter Meeting

● FEBRUARY 6TH - FEBRUARY 7TH ●



WYNDHAM GARDEN
STATE COLLEGE



REGISTRATION DETAILS WILL BE POSTED AT
WWW.CHRISTMASTREES.ORG

REGIONAL NEWS WISCONSIN

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Grand Champion of our 2024 tree contest was David Chapman, Silent Night Evergreens LLC



GREETINGS FROM WISCONSIN

We invite you to join us at our winter convention in Wisconsin Dells on January 26-28, 2025. We will be part of the “Growing Wisconsin Conference” which includes an array of ag industries. There will be seven educational tracks, any of which you may attend. The ag groups include growers of apples, berries, vegetables, grapes and Christmas trees, along with a winery track and agritourism track. There is no lack of information being shared. We also hold our wreath contest at the event.

Speakers for the Christmas Tree Track

Eric Anderson: a lifelong Christmas Tree grower and agronomist. Drawing on his extensive experience with Christmas Tree production and soil fertility, he aims to address challenges faced by growers in Wisconsin’s agriculture sector. Eric grew up on a Christmas Tree and beef farm in west-central Wisconsin. His family business, started by his father, expanded over the years to include dairy farming. After a farming accident redirected his career, Eric earned a degree in Broad Area Agriculture with an emphasis on Agronomy and Ag Engineering from UW-River Falls. With over three decades as an agronomist and experience as a CCA-certified professional (1995–2018), Eric has developed a deep understanding of soil fertility’s impact on crops, including Christmas Trees. Having applied his knowledge to improve his family’s tree production, Eric now shares his insights to help other growers enhance their operations. His convention talk will focus on the vital role of soil fertility in Christmas Tree crop production, continuing his commitment to supporting Wisconsin’s agricultural community.

Heidi Hansen: I have been in the Christmas Tree industry since 1968. At that time, my parents purchased a property to plant trees on and rented out the house. My husband, Dan, and I have been living there since 1987. In the past, we had retail lots and sold wholesale trees. Now we run a Choose & Cut farm with our sons, daughter in laws and grandchildren. We sell cut your own trees, wreaths, porch pots, and pre-cut trees. Our session is going to be on ideas for conducting your own porch pot workshops.

Joshua Koehler: President and Office Manager, will teach about “Managing Your Farm with Spreadsheets.” He is a 3rd generation Christmas tree farmer located in North Central Wisconsin. He was born and raised in the family business of growing evergreen

trees (Badger Evergreen Farms) and producing fresh evergreen products (Badger Wreath, Inc.). Joshua attended and graduated from the University of Northwestern (2004) with a bachelor’s degree majoring in business administration / general business with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and a minor in Biblical studies. Following graduation he pursued his passion in grading and excavating as an estimator and junior project manager. In 2007, he played an integral part with the starting and building of a successful heavy highway / site development / underground sewer and water contractor that quickly became a top 10 contractor in the State. In 2020, the opportunity arose for Joshua to return to the family business and he purchased Central Wisconsin Evergreens, Inc. (CWE) from his uncle. CWE is an evergreen tree wholesaler who harvests an average of 25,000-35,000 Christmas trees and digs and average of 12,000 – 15,000 B&B evergreen nursery trees each year. CWE currently farms approximately 1,000 acres of land, primarily in Lincoln County, with some acreage in Langlade and Marathon Counties as well.

Other topics will be:

Wireless Monitoring of Ag Fields, Quenton Unruh, Ranch Systems Inc.

Marsha Gray of the Real Christmas Tree Board will give an update and recap of the 2024 season.

H2A labor, Uriel Botello, Botello Harvesting. LLC

Digital Marketing & Logo Branding, Stephanie Piechowski-Seeby & DJ Brewer

Starting a Christmas tree farm, Katie Podgorski

Check out the conference website for all the details, and sign up on there as well. Bring your family to enjoy the waterpark and activities at the Kalahari Resort. Please see:

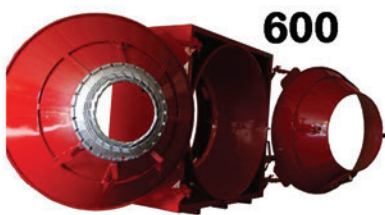
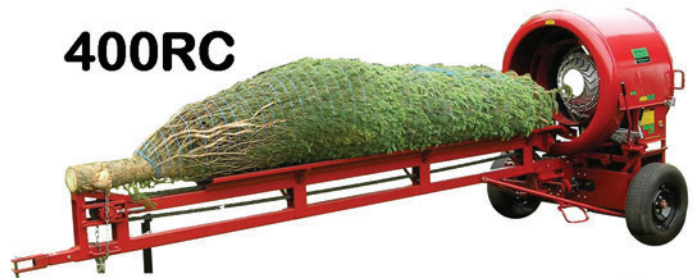
<https://freshfruitvegetable.org/>

In this issue you will see the photo of our tree contest grand champion, Silent Night Evergreens. The photo was inadvertently left out of the last issue. We apologize for that.

Have a wonderful winter!

Cheryl Nicholson, Exec. Sec. WCTPA 🌲

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