

VOLUME 22 | NUMBER 1

WINTER | 2026

GREAT LAKES

CHRISTMAS TREE JOURNAL



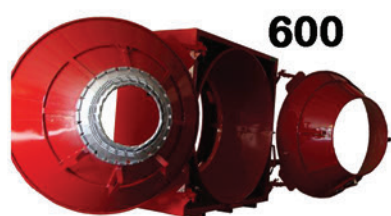
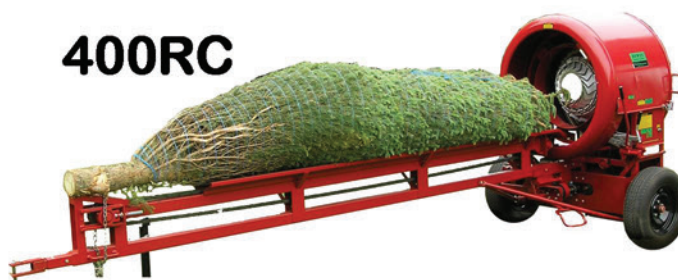
Best Tax Strategy for Christmas Tree Growers in 2026

Impacts of Climate Change on Christmas Tree Farming

Cutting-edge Science to Combat Phytophthora Root Rot in Fraser Firs

Managing Herbicide Resistance in Weeds

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Cover Photo: Peacock Road Family Farm in Laingsburg MI

FEATURES

18 | The Return of 100% Bonus Depreciation and the Best Tax Strategy for Christmas Tree Growers in 2026

By Andrew Bosserman, CPA, Esq

Andrew Bosserman, CPA, is back with his annual tax article, and this year he brings positive news as he reviews significant shifts in tax policy that will benefit Christmas tree growers for years to come.

23 | Cutting-edge Science to Combat Phytophthora Root Rot in Fraser Firs

By Adarsha Devihalli, PhD Candidate, Christmas Tree Genetics Program, NC State University, and Dr. Justin G. A. Whitehill, Assistant Professor, Christmas Tree Genetics Program Lead, NC State University

This article highlights some of the key findings from nearly four years of research and aims to shed light on how true firs can resist PRR through genetic improvements, inspiring hope for the US Christmas tree industry and its growers in the process.

29 | From Climate Data to Adaptive Insight: Impacts of Climate Change on Christmas Tree Farming in Southern Ontario

By Kelsey Leonard and Alison Clarke, University of Waterloo Christmas Tree Lab, and Casey Clunas, Frances Delaney, and Ryan Smith, Canadian Centre for Climate Services

In this article, researchers examine climate-related challenges faced by Christmas tree growers in Southern Ontario, including pests, diseases, and extreme weather events. What can you learn from our neighbors to the north that will help to prepare you for climate-related challenges on your farm?

38 | Series: How to get the most out of your weed management program in Christmas tree production?

By Sushil Grewal, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Horticulture, Michigan State University, and Debalina Saha, Assistant Professor, Department of Horticulture, Michigan State University

Topic: Managing Herbicide Resistance in Weeds

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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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Amy Start, Editor, Executive Director, Michigan Christmas Tree Association.
800.589.8733 | info@mcta.org

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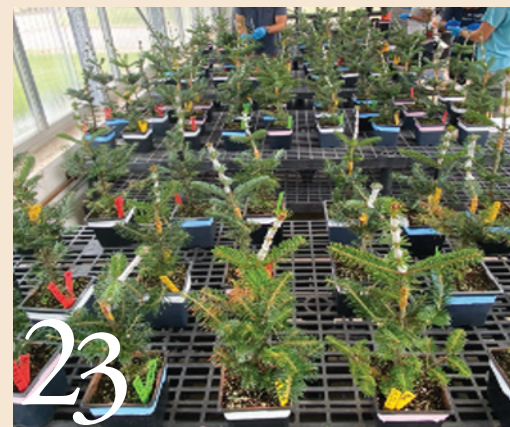
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Educational Advisor:
Dr. Bert Cregg,
Michigan State University
Bill Lindberg
Michigan State University
Extension

Proof-Readers:
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MICHIGAN CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Amy Start, Executive Director
Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal, Editor & Ad Sales
517-545-9971 | 800-589-8733
info@mcta.org | www.mcta.org

ILLINOIS CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Rob & Carol Richardson
815-675-2011 | robandcarol@richardsonfarm.com

INDIANA CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Andrea Lux, Secretary/Treasurer
info@indianachristmastrees.com | www.indianachristmastrees.com

IOWA CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Robert (Bob) Moulds, President
319-240-1338 | rmoulds@netins.net
info@iowachristmastrees.com | www.iowachristmastrees.com

KENTUCKY CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Kenney Gulley, Vice President
859-585-6637
kenney_gulley@yahoo.com

MARYLAND CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Joncie Underwood
410-398-1882
marylandcta@outlook.com | www.marylandchristmastrees.org

MASSACHUSETTS CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Sara Davagian MassCTA Secretary
413-512-0907 | MassCTASecretary@gmail.com

MINNESOTA CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Ann Marie Theien, Executive Director
218-606-0386 | info@mncta.com

MISSOURI CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Ann Harmon, Secretary MCTA
660-882-6858 home, 660-537-5555 cell
www.missourichristmastrees.org
info@starrpines.com

CHRISTMAS TREE FARMERS ASSOC. OF NEW YORK

Dave & Marcia Hicks, Interim Executive Directors
717-519-7532 (Bob) | 607-836-6456 (Dave & Marcia)
bobschoch@comcast.net | davehicks@verizon.net

OHIO CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Valerie Graham, Executive Director
740-828-3331 | val@ohiochristmastree.com

CHRISTMAS TREE FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Shirley Brennen, Executive Director
905-729-1043
shirleyinhockley@yahoo.ca | www.christmastrees.on.ca

PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

c/o Grau & Associates, LLC
80 M Street, SE, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20003

WISCONSIN CHRISTMAS TREE PRODUCERS 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



Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Holiday Kickoff at Peacock Road Family Farm – Thank you to Ed Carpenter and Christian Voorhies of Peacock Road Family Farm in Laingsburg for hosting and touring MDARD Director Tim Boring and staff for the annual MDARD holiday kickoff and presentation of the Governor's proclamation declaring December as Christmas tree month in the state of Michigan. Lt to Rt: Tim Boring, Ed Carpenter, and Amy Start.

AMY START

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

info@mcta.org

Happy New Year!

It's hard to believe it is now 2026! Hopefully, you have all your holiday stuff put away and are now relaxing after a successful selling season. Are you working on your New Year's resolutions? Is this the year to focus on weight training, reading the classics, organizing the house or farm, or maybe just hitting the daily stepping goals? I always see the New Year as a good time to take a reset and improve an aspect of my life—even if only for a few months.

If getting your finances in order is part of your 2026 plan, take a minute and look over the tax article by Andrew Bosserman, CPA. It appears that there are some good changes in store for Christmas tree growers, which may put some extra money in your pocket!

As we step into the new year, we want to acknowledge the support of the *Great Lakes Christmas Tree Journal's* contributors. Thank you to our advertisers, state partners, and the expert researchers whose fantastic articles enrich our industry. We appreciate and thank our educational partner, Michigan State University, whose support is essential to our mission. Collectively, our goal is to provide content that not only helps your farm thrive today but also strengthens the Christmas tree industry tomorrow. We ask you to please mention the GLCTJ when making your farm purchases and let the advertisers know that you saw their ad in our publication.

Wishing you all the best in 2026!

Amy Start, Editor



UPCOMING EVENTS 2026 CALENDAR

January 18-20	WCTPA Winter Convention: "Creating Real Value" Wisconsin Dells, WI	June 26-27	OCTA Summer Meeting at Feisley Tree Farm in Belmont County
January 30-31	ICTGA Winter Meeting will be held at the Boone County Fairgrounds, just north of Zionsville, IN	July 10-11	Iowa Christmas Tree Association Summer Meeting will be at Strautman's Tree Farm in Cambridge, Iowa
February 5-6	PCTGA's Winter Meeting in Boalsburg, PA, at the Wyndham Hotel	July 16-18	CTFANY Summer Meeting
February 20-21	Minnesota Christmas Tree Association Winter Convention will be at the Braham Event Center	July 23-24	Michigan Christmas Tree Association Summer Meeting will be held at Timberly Tree Farm in Sturgis, MI
February 21	OCTA Winter Meeting will be at the Quest Center in Columbus, OH	August 6-8	Heartland Christmas Convention: "The Making of an Old-Fashioned Christmas" Hosted by Hann's Christmas Farm, Oregon, Wisconsin
February 27	Michigan Christmas Tree Association Winter Meeting will be held at the Bavarian Inn and Conference Center in Frankenmuth, MI	September 25-26	MNCTA 2026 Summer Convention will be hosted by Plants Beautiful Nursery

Visit association websites for more meeting details!



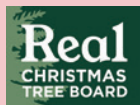
SAVE THE DATE!

THE MAKING OF AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS



2026 HEARTLAND CHRISTMAS CONVENTION AUGUST 6TH - 8TH

*National Christmas Tree
Organizations' Summer Meetings*



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SUMMER CONVENTION OVERVIEW:

Hosted at one of the largest
Choose-and-Cut farms in
Wisconsin, this event offers
hands-on learning:

In the Field

- Shearing and leader control demonstrations
- Pre-emergent herbicide strategies
- Calibrating sprayers
- Row mulching
- Pest control and more!

Of High-End Holiday Greens

- Floral and greenery design demonstrations
- Step-by-step to large-scale wholesale wreath production
- Creative add-ons
- Best practices and more!

For Optimizing Retail

- Point-of-sale systems
- Layout and merchandising
- In-season restocking and store workflows
- Pricing strategies and more!

**Offsite field trips* for kids
such as a trip to the Zoo!**

**pending minimum number of registrants*



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FIND US ON FACEBOOK: GREATLAKES CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS

Congressman John Moolenaar •
December 1 at 5:08 PM · 🌐

Today I introduced a resolution on the House floor to recognize Korson's Tree Farms of Montcalm County for being selected to provide the 2025 White House Christmas Tree... See more



👍 938

174 comments 65 shares

Matthew Quinn •
🌟 All-star contributor · + Add topic · November 20 at 4:56 PM · 🌐

Don't worry. I slapped the tailgate and said "that ain't going nowhere"...



Shale Hills Farm •
🌟 Top contributor · + Add topic · November 30 at 7:26 PM · 🌐

Anxious Christmas trees waiting to be wrapped so they can soon be the focal point of someone's living room! The one entering the netting machine is a spruce, follow... See more



John Thomas Runey •
🌟 Rising contributor · + Add topic · November 30 at 7:17 PM · 🌐



Rockford Tree Farm is at Rockford Tree Farm.
November 29 at 5:46 PM · Rockford ·

🎵 Oh Christmas Tree (feat. Wildlife Moon) (Instrumental) - Phury · 🌐

That's a wrap on our first full week of business 🥰 A little exhausted, but so incredibly grateful!! A sincere THANK YOU to all that have support us so far. It's honest!... See more

www.facebook.com/groups/GreatLakesChristmasTreeGrowers/

facebook



Mike Moyer

Top contributor

+ Add topic

November 23 at 6:24 AM

Just a few photos from opening weekend. Pretty strong sales of choose and cut trees and on par with last years early weekend. Good luck everyone.



John Tillman commented on this photo.



John Tillman

Top contributor

+ Add topic

November 18 at 9:23 AM

17 foot tree getting ready to go through the big baler



Grace Farms of Central New York

+ Add topic

November 23 at 7:28 AM



Alan Binger

All-star contributor

+ Add topic

November 22 at 8:42 AM

Here we go! Good luck to everyone starting their sales season today. After all these years, I always have a little bit of the first day jitters until those first few customers come. What did I forget? 🌲 🎄



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MSU Winter Webinar Series: “Challenges on the horizon.”

Registration link: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/MSUWinterWebinar26/>



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY | Extension

CHRISTMAS TREE WEBINAR SERIES STARTS FEBRUARY 5, 2026

General Information:

MSU Winter Webinar Series: “Challenges on the horizon.”

Dates: February 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th 2026

Time 12:30 pm to 2 pm ET

A winter webinar series focusing on challenges that will likely impact Christmas tree producers in the Midwest. Each week will feature a different topic (development of herbicide resistant weeds, maintaining productive soils through multiple crop rotations, invasive insect species, and needle retention in response to warming temperatures) and potential solutions to address those challenges. RUP credits for 2/5 and 2/19

Cost: \$20 to register for the entire series

February 5th, 2026

Development of herbicide resistance in MI weeds: Dr. Erin Hill, Michigan State University:

Summary: Weed control is a major challenge in Christmas tree production. Inadequate weed control reduces tree growth and quality and can result in greater transplant mortality and longer time intervals between rotations. Herbicides are commonly used as part of a weed control program to manage weeds. However, the development of herbicide-resistant weeds could be a major challenge to future weed control in Christmas tree production. This webinar will discuss what herbicide resistance is, how weeds become resistant to herbicides, strategies to minimize or prevent this from happening, and steps growers can implement if weed resistance is suspected.

February 13th, 2026

Cold acclimation and needle retention: Dr. Mason MacDonald, Dalhousie University

Summary: Christmas trees undergo a set of physiological changes in response to decreasing temperatures and shortening photoperiod. One of those responses is an increase in needle set, or the ability to hold needles post-harvest. However, with increasing fall temperatures and the demand for trees to be harvested and sold earlier in the fall, the ability for trees to change physiologically and hold needles may be impacted.

February 19th, 2026

Invasive insect update: Dr. Deborah McCullough, Michigan State University

Summary: Elongated hemlock scale? Cryptomeria Scale? Balsam woolly adelgid? These insect pests have not been common in the Great Lakes region; recent sightings may indicate that these pests are encroaching on the area. Join Dr. Deborah McCullough as she discusses the current status and research of these pests. Discussion will include their life cycle, the damage they do to Christmas trees, how to scout for signs of these pests, and steps growers can implement to prevent their spread in the region.

February 26th, 2026

Maintaining productive soils in continual cropping systems: Monica Jean, Michigan State University

Summary: Maintaining productive soils is a challenge in agricultural production systems. Many Christmas tree fields have been in production for multiple tree rotations. This webinar will discuss how continuous production can impact soil health and why it matters for Christmas tree producers. This webinar will showcase new research in soil testing parameters for soil health and potential application for Christmas tree production in the future. 🌲





UPDATES FROM THE RCTB

To respond to media inquiries, RCTB's Briefing and Media Guide clarified that Canadian-produced Christmas trees are current tariff exempt.

RCTB Evaluation Report Indicates Strong Return on Public Relations

RCTB partnered with Timothy Richards of the University of Arizona and Badger Metrics, LLC, to complete an *RCTB Evaluation Report* designed to estimate the long-run impact of RCTB promotion activities from 2020-24. Using econometric analysis, the report separates the effect general economic trends can have on demand and focuses on RCTB's marketing activities to estimate the return on investment for grower and importer dollars invested in marketing. Highlights are as follows:

- All RCTB activities were deemed effective in raising demand for real Christmas trees
- RCTB public relations efforts were noted as particularly profitable and worth investing additional dollars in
- Social media activities most likely played a role in the success of PR efforts due to the virality of social media platforms that can broaden the reach of PR
- Investments in video production were noted as being less profitable, which aligns with RCTB's decision to produce fewer videos

The entire *RCTB Evaluation Report* is available on the INDUSTRY tab at realchristmastreeboard.org.

RCTB Media Outreach

Each year in advance of the holiday season, the Real Christmas Tree Board shares its annual *Briefing and Media Guide* to provide media members with consistent talking points and information developed by RCTB based on consumer and industry research. Further, the guide helps ensure accurate media coverage that speaks to consumer interests while debunking common myths that can go viral and lead to misconceptions about the industry. The media guide also includes:

- The seasonal outlook based on grower survey results
- A Christmas tree variety primer
- Spokesperson contact information

To help media members secure the most accurate information, the guide also provides a "know your sources" section that provides helpful context and background concerning RCTB, the National Christmas Tree Association and the American

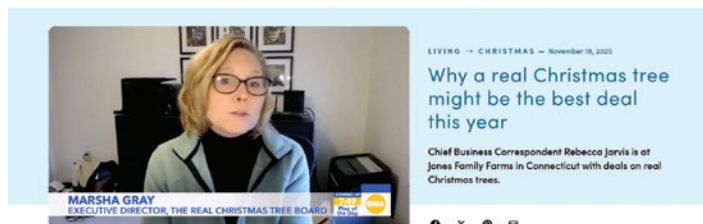
TARIFF EXEMPT

As an agricultural commodity under the USMCA, Canadian-produced real Christmas trees are currently exempt from tariffs.

The real Christmas tree industry doesn't import product from overseas, but it does partner with Canadian producers to help supply retailers throughout the country.

Christmas Tree Association. The guide differentiates RCTB and NCTA from ACTA, noting the latter does not represent real Christmas tree growers.

As of December 2, 2025, RCTB secured feature segments on both Good Morning America and The Today show that compared the rising costs of artificial trees to the tariff-free and stable prices of real Christmas trees in the U.S. The segments included data from RCTB's grower survey indicating 84% of real Christmas tree growers surveyed do not intend to increase wholesale prices, as well as commentary from RCTB's executive director Marsha Gray.



In January, RCTB will share data from its seasonal media outreach campaign demonstrating its reach on social media, through influencer partnerships, via paid digital search and extensive media coverage in multiple markets, plus syndication. Data will be shared through the RCTB e-newsletter, website, and at state and regional meetings.

UPDATES FROM THE RCTB

are a great resource for teachers and parents in the leadup to the holidays — showcasing the journey of a Christmas tree from seedling to harvest.

RCTB Approves Six Research Projects for FY 2025-26

Each year, RCTB funds a series of research projects to address the most pressing concerns of growers. This season, RCTB invested more than \$168,234 in the six projects listed below.

- **Effectiveness of fungicides in reducing Phytophthora root rot losses in Christmas tree Plantations** – Washington State University – Dr. Marianne Elliot and Dr. Gary Chastagner
- **Evaluating New Herbicides to Manage Resistant Weeds in Christmas Trees** – Oregon State University – Dr. Marcelo Moretti
- **Selecting Fraser fir genotypes for reduced coning** – Michigan State University – Dr. Bert Cregg
- **Creating a useful degree day model to target vulnerable stages of armored scales** – North Carolina State University – Dr. Jamie Bookwalter
- **Testing plant growth regulators to prevent needle loss** – University of New Brunswick – Dr. Rafaella Mayrinck; Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – Dr. Richard Cowles
- **Developing Pest Monitoring Tools for Oregon and Washington Christmas Tree Farms** – Oregon State University – Dr. Priya Rajarapu

Representatives of the RCTB are scheduled to present at many state and regional meetings this winter. We hope to see you in-person!

RCTB Research Webinars

Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time.

Speaker: Dr. Gary Chastagner – Washington State University
Title: Filling research gaps to improve the management of Phytophthora root rot.

Gary's list of topics to be cover – Review of the Phytophthora life cycle, conditions that favor disease development, tolerance of trees species to Phytophthora Root Rot, and the preliminary results of fungicide research. Also, future research ideas.

Thursday, January 22, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time.

Speaker: Dr Philipp Zerbe – University of California Davis
Title: Christmas Tree Genetic Improvement Through Identification of Stress Defense Mechanisms

Dr. Philipp Zerbe will present his research developing a comprehensive map of gene targets enabling precision breeding to build stress resistance mechanisms and aroma metabolism in fir trees. By integrating these genomic tools into breeding programs, the time required to develop improved Christmas tree varieties can be reduced from 25–30 years to under a decade, significantly improving productivity and profitability for U.S. growers while helping the industry adapt to future environmental pressures. 🌲



Virtual Farm Tours Available Online

RCTB would like to thank Tyler Stone and Avery Barr for hosting the Oregon and North Carolina Virtual Farm Tours. Combined the tours had a live Zoom audience of 420 classrooms and 7,891 students from more than 43 states. Both tours garnered another 150 views on YouTube as of November 12.

Both tours were very positively received according to a post-event survey. More than 92% of the respondents indicated the content aligned with their curriculum, with 80% noting they would recommend the tour to others and 75% saying they would be interested in participating in another virtual tour. A total of 74% noted they had a very positive opinion of the industry and another 24% had a positive opinion.

The most popular highlights from the Oregon tour were the hand-trimming of the trees and seeing the helicopters' role in the harvest process. Teachers sincerely appreciated Farmer Tyler's interest in answering questions while simultaneously teaching and demonstrating how things are done. As one noted, "This is my third year doing a virtual Christmas tree farm and they have gotten better each year! This was so fun, and my kids really stayed engaged. It is pretty cool that the tree farm is actually really close to us (Salem) as that engages my young students even more knowing that it is very close to us. Thank you for the well thought out, quality experience for my students!"

North Carolina tour attendees appreciated seeing a working farm in action and the added benefit of seeing how wreaths and garlands are made. One teacher noted, "It was so informative and kept most of my second graders' attention the whole time. It generated a LOT of questions and curiosity!" Another stated they liked the "real world application with a topic that students can relate to (getting a tree for Christmas). I appreciated the videos of them showing different parts of the process, seeing the farm." Farmer Avery also did a great job demonstrating skills needed in farming, with one teacher adding that they liked "Seeing the tree growing process up close and seeing the math and measurements tied in with the presentation."

The recorded versions of the tours are expected to secure additional views as they did last year. Both tours are now available online at:

virtualfarmtrips.com/partner/the-real-christmas-tree-board/

Growers are encouraged to share links to the tours on their social media platforms and with their local school districts. The tours

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The White House Decorates for Christmas with a Michigan Tree

BY RICK DUNGEY, NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION



The weather was perfect, and everyone was all smiles as the tree selected from the Korsons in September by Dale Haney, White House Grounds Supervisor, made its way up the North Drive in a big green wagon pulled by Belgian draft horses. The First Lady then walked out to see the tree and invite the Korson family inside to visit.

As media outlets begin putting out stories on Christmas trees, one of the more common questions we are fielding is, "Are tariffs impacting the prices of Christmas trees this year?"

Well, they are for fake ones.

Here are the brief, repeatable points about tariffs we are sharing with the media when asked. Feel free to incorporate these in your own words if you are asked about this topic.

- The tariff on fake trees is 30-90%.
- Close to 90% of all fake trees are imported from China.
- Most packaging includes a warning label about potential health harm due to the lead content of the PVC plastic. <https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/>
- Real Christmas trees are a USMCA compliant plant product, meaning they are exempt from any tariffs between the U.S., Mexico and Canada.
- Producers can sell their Christmas trees to markets anywhere in North America.
- National Advocacy Partnership Program (NAPP), formerly called the TIP program – The program's purpose is to use combined funds in efforts to protect and advocate for everyone in the Christmas tree industry, when speaking with one voice and working on issues as an industry is more effective than doing so in small groups.
- What does it cost? It's \$25 per state/regional association member. That's it: \$25. Less than the cost of one tree per year.



The Korsons were fantastic representatives of everyone who grows and sells farm-grown Christmas trees. The press pool was packed, and news of the tree spread far and wide. Hopefully, nobody underestimates the value of showing the whole world that a farm-grown Christmas tree is put into the White House each year.

It's a common and fair question when someone asks, "What does NCTA spend that money on?"

Protection and Advocacy work areas in the 2025 NCTA operating budget:

Management Fee-Advocacy and Protection . . .	\$35,934
AmericanHort Contract & Advocacy	\$35,000
Consumer Polling	\$8,500
White House Tree - Grand Champion	\$3,000
Tree Contest	\$3,000
Holiday Safety - Fire codes and messages	\$5,000
Management Fee - Voice of Industry	\$3,922
Total	\$94,356

Projected income from NAPP and Advocacy Sponsorships

NAPP	\$38,000
Advocacy Sponsorships	\$55,000
Total	\$93,000

The NAPP program is essential to NCTA's mission to protect and advocate for the farm-grown Christmas tree industry. The funds collected through the program, added to those directly from NCTA members paid as an addition to annual dues, are vital in supporting NCTA's legislative and regulatory initiatives, holiday safety, research, national media advocacy and other protection-focused programs.

These programs allow the NCTA (on behalf of the industry) to:

- Sign on to legislative and regulatory communications
- Speak to the general public and media about the benefits of farm-grown Christmas trees and the awfulness of fake plastic trees
- Promote proper care for the safe use of real Christmas trees

What are some of the issues NCTA advocates for everyone? Here is a list of just the first 6 months of issues for 2025:

Jan	Main Street Tax Certainty Act of 2025 – legislation to make permanent the 20% 199A tax deduction for small and family-owned business
Jan	National Rollover Protective Structure rebate program – helps offset cost of retrofitting old tractors with a rollover bar
Feb	Recommending to NOT impose tariff on Canadian peat moss
Mar	Supporting Farm Operations Act, would freeze the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) for H-2A migrant farm workers
Mar	Campaign to urge a high tariff on plastic trees imported from China without any exemptions

Mar	Urging participation in crafting Make America Healthy Again Commission report to ensure no adverse impact on agriculture
Mar	Supporting the Agricultural Labeling Uniformity Act, important legislation to reaffirm that EPA is the primary, federal authority under FIFRA for making pesticide findings and decisions
June	Another letter to Sec of Ag Rollins to ensure food and agriculture have a seat at the table during the development of policy recommendations related to the recent Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission report, as well as any future Commission activities
June	Letter to Sec. of Ag Rollins on behalf of America's specialty crop growers, thanking the April 30, 2025, announcement that USDA will be releasing an additional \$1.3 billion for the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program.

Is everyone impacted by all these issues? No, of course not. But by having NCTA funded to be the advocate and voice whether the issue is labor, pesticide labeling, specialty crop funds or telling the truth about imported plastic fake trees, the whole industry benefits.

While the NAPP program is designed for the greater good of the industry, your individual association members also receive specific benefits, including:

- A FREE basic listing on the NCTA Website Tree Locator, or an enhanced listing for \$15
- A link to their own website for \$25
- The opportunity to purchase a discounted subscription to the National Christmas Tree Journal for \$37, a savings of more than \$20 off the regular price

States participating in NAPP in 2024 (we're getting sign-ups for 2025 now).

California Christmas Tree Association
Georgia Christmas Tree Association
Illinois Christmas Tree Association
Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association
Kansas Christmas Tree Grower Association
Maine Christmas Tree Growers Association
Maryland Christmas Tree Association
Michigan Christmas Tree Association
Minnesota Christmas Tree Association
Missouri Christmas Tree Producers Association
New Hampshire & Vermont Christmas Tree Association
North Carolina Christmas Tree Association
Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association
Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association
South Carolina Christmas Tree Association
Southern Christmas Tree Association
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Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Association
Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association

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The Return of 100% Bonus Depreciation and the Best Tax Strategy for Christmas Tree Growers in 2026



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 write this article in late 2025, Christmas tree growers have received excellent news on the tax front. After years of uncertainty and phase-outs, Congress has permanently enacted 100% bonus depreciation as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed into law earlier this year. This marks a significant shift in tax policy that will benefit Christmas tree growers for years to come.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act and 100% Bonus Depreciation

Among the many provisions introduced in OBBBA, the return of 100% bonus depreciation stands out as one of the most highly anticipated changes by taxpayers and tax professionals alike, and for good reason.

Designed to encourage domestic economic investment, bonus depreciation is a special tax incentive that allows businesses to accelerate future depreciation deductions into the current tax year. This leads to improved cash flow by reducing current year federal taxes.

Prior to the passage of OBBBA, the future of bonus depreciation was uncertain. The phase-out from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 meant bonus depreciation was reduced to 60% in 2024, 40% in 2025, and was scheduled to decrease to 20% in 2026 before expiring completely in 2027.

For example, a Christmas tree grower who purchased a \$20,000 utility vehicle in 2024 could only immediately deduct 60% of the purchase price (\$12,000) and would have to depreciate the remaining 40% (\$8,000) over the vehicle's useful life. Under the new law, that same grower purchasing a \$20,000 utility vehicle in 2026 can now immediately deduct the full \$20,000 purchase price on his tax return.

The permanent enactment of 100% bonus depreciation represents a major win for Christmas tree growers. The ability to fully expense equipment purchases—from tractors and mowers to balers and chainsaws—in the year of purchase provides significant tax savings and improved cash flow.

Complexity and Planning Considerations

Although the concept of bonus depreciation seems straightforward, its implementation is governed by complex rules and limitations that demand careful planning. A thorough understanding of these nuances, along with awareness of

alternative or complementary tax strategies, is essential for crafting a well-rounded and effective tax plan.

For instance, bonus depreciation generally applies to new and used property with a recovery period of 20 years or less. Most equipment purchases by Christmas tree growers will qualify. However, certain property, such as land and buildings, usually will not qualify for bonus depreciation.

Additionally, growers should be aware that bonus depreciation is calculated before Section 179 expensing. While this technical detail may seem minor, it can affect tax planning strategies, especially for growers who are just starting out or experiencing tax losses in early years of operation.

Christmas tree growers should work with their tax professionals to ensure they are maximizing the benefit of 100% bonus depreciation alongside other available deductions, such as Section 179 expensing and the De Minimis Safe Harbor Election for assets costing \$2,500 or less.

The #1 Way Christmas Tree Growers Save Taxes Remains Unchanged

While the permanent enactment of 100% bonus depreciation is excellent news, it's important to remember that the #1 way most Christmas tree growers save taxes hasn't changed and remains as powerful as ever: electing capital gain treatment under Internal Revenue Code § 631.

The capital gain election is permanent in the tax code and allows income from the sale of cut Christmas trees to be taxed as capital gains rather than ordinary income. This election can save Christmas tree growers thousands of dollars in federal income taxes each year.

Growers prefer capital gain income because it is taxed at lower rates (0%, 15%, or 20%, depending on income level) than ordinary income and is not subject to self-employment taxes (an additional 15.3% tax on earned

income). This combination of lower tax rates and exemption from self-employment taxes makes the capital gain election an extremely powerful tax-saving tool.

For Christmas tree sales to qualify as capital gain income, they must be considered “timber.” Sales of cut Christmas trees are “timber” if they meet all of the following four requirements:

1. Evergreen trees
2. More than six years old
3. Severed from the roots
4. Sold for ornamental purposes

Trees sold wholesale, pre-cut, and choose-and-cut will qualify if they meet the four requirements above and the grower has owned the trees (or had the right to cut the trees) for more than one year.

Three Essential Requirements for Capital Gain Treatment

To properly claim and support a capital gain election, growers must make three main adjustments to their recordkeeping and operations:

1) Recordkeeping

If a grower elects capital gain treatment, he must be able to prove that the trees he sold meet the four capital gain requirements listed above. A grower must track qualifying sales separately from non-qualifying sales.

Certain trees do not qualify for capital gain treatment, such as balled and burlapped trees, potted trees, pre-cut trees purchased from another farm (unless pursuant to a special arrangement), and non-evergreen trees.

This tracking typically begins with the grower's point-of-sale (POS) system. A grower's POS should, at a minimum, have different “items” for qualifying and non-qualifying Christmas tree sales. Even more detail, such as species and height of trees sold, is beneficial for both tax purposes and operational improvements.

2) Tree Count

The IRS requires a yearly tree count because a grower's Christmas trees are "inventory" since the grower is in the business of retailing trees to customers. A yearly inventory count is important to calculate a grower's depletion deduction (similar to Cost of Goods Sold).

The inventory of trees on a farm should be counted once per year. The best time is right after the Christmas season, so the count is as close as possible to the beginning of the year and before taxes are filed. However, other times of the year are permissible if the timing is consistent from year to year.

3) Tax Return

A grower must report income and expenses differently on his tax return to elect capital gain treatment.

First, a grower must report capital gain income separately from ordinary income. This separate reporting is typically accomplished by reporting

"stumpage" costs on the grower's profit and loss tax form (generally Schedule F or C for a sole proprietor or single-member LLC). The income qualifying for capital gain treatment is deducted as "stumpage" expense, and the amount of stumpage expense is reported as the sales price on Form 4797 to calculate capital gain.

Second, a grower must also file Form T. Form T was created for timber owners; however, Christmas trees are considered timber under tax law if they meet the four capital gain requirements under IRC § 631. If a grower is electing capital gain treatment under IRC § 631(a), which applies to most choose-and-cut, as well as wholesale, growers, he should also check the applicable box on Form T to inform the IRS they are electing capital gain treatment.

Conclusion

The permanent enactment of 100% bonus depreciation through the OBBBA provides Christmas tree growers with a

valuable tool for managing equipment purchases and improving cash flow in 2026 and beyond. However, the capital gain election under IRC § 631 remains the #1 way to save taxes for Christmas tree growers.

Unlike bonus depreciation, which has been subject to political changes and phase-outs over the years, the capital gain election is permanent in the tax code and provides consistent, reliable tax savings year after year. The combination of lower tax rates and exemption from self-employment taxes makes this election an essential strategy for every Christmas tree grower.

However, special recordkeeping and tax return adjustments must be made to properly claim and support a capital gain election. Consulting with an experienced tax preparer or CPA is strongly recommended to ensure you're maximizing both the new bonus depreciation rules and the permanent capital gain election. ▲



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Cutting-edge Science to Combat Phytophthora Root Rot in Fraser Firs

BY ADARSHA DEVIHALLI (PHD CANDIDATE, CHRISTMAS TREE GENETICS PROGRAM, NC STATE UNIVERSITY)
AND DR. JUSTIN G. A. WHITEHILL (ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, CHRISTMAS TREE GENETICS PROGRAM LEAD,
NC STATE UNIVERSITY)

*The NC State University Christmas Tree Genetics program was created to address key challenges facing Christmas tree production. Our primary goal is to support the Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) Christmas tree industry using genetic approaches and principles. Dr. John Frampton – the programs first director – left a foundational legacy for the Christmas tree industry by identifying and developing an elite first generation Fraser fir breeding program which utilized cutting-edge and proper modern genetic improvement principles for forest tree species. Dr. Justin Whitehill has continued this legacy beginning at NC State in August 2020 at the height of a global pandemic. As one of Dr. Whitehill's first PhD students, my colleagues and I have integrated expertise in genomics, molecular biology, plant pathology, entomology, biochemistry, tissue culture, and Extension to develop novel avenues to circumvent the persistent bottlenecks that plague the cultivation of Fraser fir Christmas trees. My PhD research focuses on developing solutions for the most serious threat to Fraser firs – the devastating Phytophthora root rot (PRR) disease. I'm excited to share highlights from nearly four years of research on this topic. We hope to shine a light on the ways in which true firs can resist PRR through genetic improvements and inspire hope for the US Christmas tree industry and its growers in the process.*



Figure 1 – Symptoms of PRR infection on Fraser fir. (a) Adarsha Devihalli examining PRR-infected Fraser fir trees at the Upper Mountain Research Station in Laurel Springs, NC during his first visit in fall 2021 (Photo credit Justin Whitehill). Common symptoms of PRR infection include: (b) branch flagging/dieback, (c) stem cankers, (d) bark necrosis, (e) rotting roots, and (f) sloughing of the root cortex (photo credit Justin Whitehill & Adarsha Devihalli).

Phytophthora root rot is THE biggest threat to Fraser fir production

Phytophthora root rot (PRR) is recognized as the most serious threat to the survival of Fraser fir Christmas trees in North Carolina and other regions where Fraser fir is grown. Primarily caused by the water mold *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and other/related *Phytophthora* species, the disease thrives in wet, poorly drained soils and will attack and kill the roots of the plant, ultimately leading to tree death. Early symptoms of infection include wilting, stunted growth, yellowing needles, and tree dieback. As the infection progresses, symptoms include stem canker, necrosis on the branches, and root rot (FIGURE 1). Infection can lead to significant and sudden losses of trees in both nursery beds and plantations. Unfortunately, Fraser fir completely lacks any natural resistance to this pathogen. Losses from

PRR have been devastating to growers, with estimates ranging from 15-20% annually. PRR presents a never-ending challenge for disease management. The most effective management strategies include good site selection, proper drainage, and the use of phytosanitary practices. However, continued research into genetic resistance mechanisms and ultimately solutions to this problem remains critical for the future of the Fraser fir Christmas tree industry.

Understanding the interaction between the PRR pathogen and firs

Unfortunately, Fraser fir does not possess any natural resistance against infection from the PRR pathogen. The lack of a shared co-evolutionary history between these two organisms has likely led to the absence of specific defense traits against this pathogen. However, Fraser firs are not completely defenseless

– they just lack targeted defenses against this specific pathogen. Ultimately, our goal is to select PRR-resistant Fraser fir genotypes by integrating the genetic resilience present in closely related fir species that share a co-evolutionary history with the pathogen. Meeting this goal requires a deep knowledge of the resistance mechanisms, traits, and underlying genes in these important conifer species. While Fraser fir is completely susceptible to the PRR pathogen, exotic fir species such as momi (*A. firma*) and Trojan (*A. nordmanniana* subsp. *equi-trojani*) fir possess natural resistance against PRR disease. Resistance against the *P. cinnamomi* pathogen is likely due to a shared co-evolutionary history between momi (Japan) and Trojan (Turkey) fir, as the disease is thought to originate from a region closer to the native habitats of these species. Therefore, our research explores the hypothesis that these firs possess unique resistance



Figure 2 – Artificial stem inoculation experiment executed in the Whitehill lab at NC State University (summer 2023). Over 100 clonally grafted Fraser, Trojan, and momi fir trees were inoculated with *Phytophthora cinnamomi* to identify genes involved in the interaction between the trees and pathogen (photo credit Justin Whitehill).

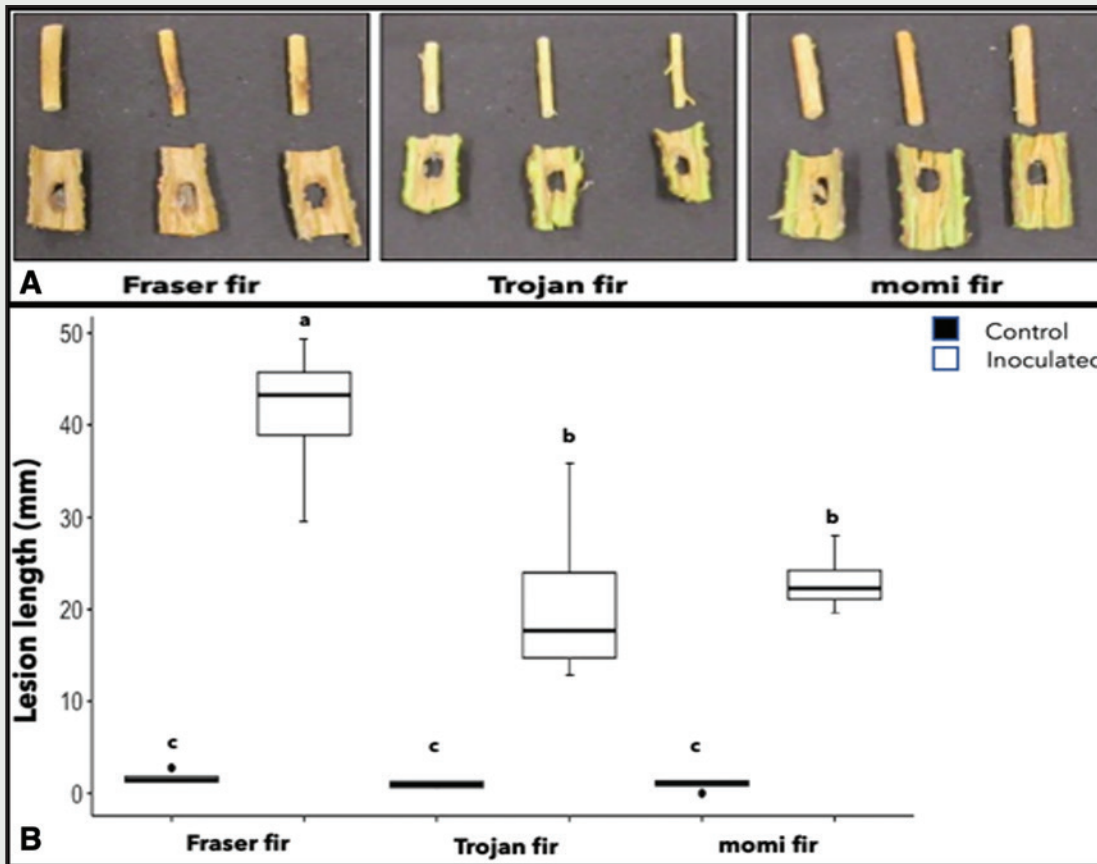


Figure 3 – Resistant versus susceptible firs to infection with *P. cinnamomi*. (a) Necrotic bark samples three days after inoculation with *P. cinnamomi*. Fraser fir bark tissue had significantly more necrosis at the point of artificial inoculation when compared to Trojan and momi fir samples (Photo credit Justin Whitehill). (b) Fraser fir had significantly higher lesions as compared to momi and Trojan firs ten days after artificial inoculation (photo credit Adarsha Devihalli).

mechanisms against the PRR pathogen due to a shared co-evolutionary history. By contrast, Fraser fir is completely “naive” to the *P. cinnamomi* pathogen. The first known interaction between these species dates to 1963, when the first report of an infected Fraser fir was published in the scientific literature.

The arms race between the PRR pathogen and fir trees

We conducted two greenhouse trials using clonal grafts of momi, Trojan (this specific tree was known to be resistant as it had survived a previous challenge with the PRR pathogen), and Fraser (an elite cultivar developed by the Christmas tree genetics program) fir during the summers of 2022 and 2023 (Figure 2). Our goal was to compare how resistant (momi and Trojan), and susceptible (Fraser) firs respond to infection by the pathogen *P. cinnamomi*. Samples were collected at specific time intervals to assess the various stages of the early infection process (i.e., the first three days). These experiments allowed us to evaluate not only the trees’ response to

infection, but we could also study how the pathogen infects the trees. The results from these experiments were striking! First, from the tree’s perspective, the lesions that developed on momi and Trojan fir following infection were significantly smaller than those that formed on Fraser fir (Figure 3). These findings provide compelling evidence that momi and Trojan fir have a much higher level of natural resistance against this disease than Fraser fir. Digging even deeper, we found that momi and Fraser fir had fundamentally different battle plans (at the molecular level) when responding to the PRR pathogen three days after infection. Finally, the biochemical makeup of Fraser and momi fir bark revealed the presence of unique specialized biochemicals in the resistant trees. These biochemicals (commonly referred to as antioxidants) are suspected to play a critical role in defense against pathogens and pests. Taken together, these insights provide a road map for novel genetics and management strategies for all fir species against PRR disease.

Understanding the enemy – reading the DNA playbook of the *Phytophthora cinnamomi* pathogen

In contrast to the trees’ response to infection, we were also able to read the pathogens’ playbook as it was actively attacking fir trees. For instance, early during the process (within six hours), the pathogen implements an infection strategy that varies by species. However, following 72 hours of infection, there were no differences in the way the pathogen responded to any of the species. To further understand these interactions at the molecular level and thanks to leaps in DNA sequencing technology, we were able to map the entire genetic “blueprint” of the PRR pathogen. We focused on sequencing the genome – the entire complement of DNA stored in every cell within an organism – of the most aggressive *P. cinnamomi* sample identified to date by the Christmas tree genetics program. This isolate of the pathogen was originally collected from an infected

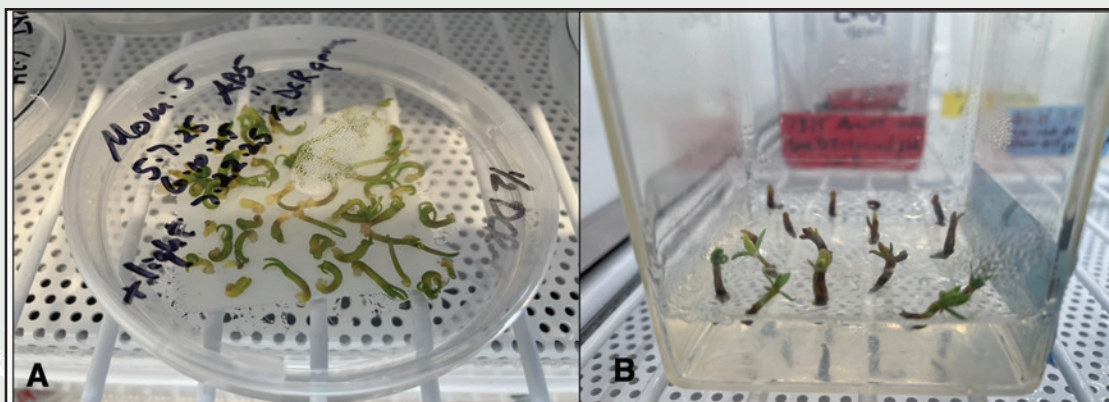


Figure 4 – Somatic embryogenesis (SE) of momi fir explants on germination media. (a) Multiple somatic embryos producing cotyledons are generated from a single zygotic embryo; and (b) SE momi fir explants germinating to produce shoots and roots (photos credit Robert Thomas).

Fraser fir located in Alleghany County in western North Carolina in 2013. To read the pathogen's DNA, we used cutting-edge sequencing technologies from Oxford Nanopore Technology (ONT) and Illumina. Using this approach, we developed a high-quality draft genome that comprises more than 20,000 different pathogen genes. This rich genetic resource opens the door for even more powerful and impactful studies. For instance, we can now ask new questions about this pathogen, including how it infects, adapts, and spreads. We can also speed up our ability to detect the disease in the field, improve early warning systems, and enhance disease management strategies. Finally, comparison of these pathogens' genomes to other isolates and even closely related species will allow us to build a toolkit that benefits all Christmas tree producers.

A new frontier for fir tree propagation, somatic embryogenesis

Somatic embryogenesis (SE) is an advanced tissue culture technique that enables us to make exact copies of specific trees from a single embryo. Immature embryos are cultured in a Petri dish and encouraged to form masses of embryogenic cells. These cells can then proliferate, mature, and finally regenerate into thousands of genetically identical trees. The Whitehill Lab has invested significant resources into developing SE pipelines for Fraser, momi, and Trojan firs. This process requires careful optimization at every

step, and not all trees respond the same. Some individuals are much more responsive to the process than others. SE is already the standard methodology for propagation of several species of conifer, including Norway spruce, Nordmann fir, and balsam fir. However, developing this method for Fraser and momi firs is of particular importance to North Carolina growers. A rapid and reliable SE pipeline will lead to multiple benefits for Christmas tree growers. The most important of which includes the accelerated genetic improvement of Fraser fir. Additionally, the success of SE in Fraser fir will pave the way for the implementation of even more advanced precision breeding (e.g., CRISPR) methodologies, which will eventually lead to the development of PRR-resistant Fraser fir trees and a steady supply of PRR-resistant momi fir rootstocks for the industry (Figure 4).

Conclusion

The Whitehill Christmas Tree Genetics Lab is committed to developing genetic solutions to the challenge posed by the continued spread of the PRR pathogen across North America. Research in this area is a top priority for the lab, and everyone recognizes its importance for the continued future success of not only the Fraser fir Christmas tree industry in North Carolina, but all *Abies* species that are cultivated around the world. Extreme weather events in recent years have led to long periods of wet, semi-warm conditions, which are ideal for the proliferation and spread of the PRR disease. The extent of PRR infections

are often revealed during periods of drought. In recent years, significant PRR induced mortality events have been observed in the Pacific Northwest, New England, Atlantic Canada, and North Carolina, just to name a few. However, by integrating cutting-edge technologies, including genomics, metabolomics, and advanced genome editing techniques, we hope that our team is already gaining vital new insights into the pathways and mechanisms underlying PRR resistance. Future experiments will focus on the functional characterization of key resistance genes and defense traits. These efforts will bring us even closer to developing truly PRR-resistant Fraser fir and ensuring a healthier and more resilient Christmas tree industry for years to come. If you would like to learn more or get involved, please reach out to the Christmas Tree Genetics Lab at NC State (<https://research.cnr.ncsu.edu/whitehilllab/>) or follow our progress with our colleagues around the world through our collaborative efforts supported through the A GIFT SEED project (<https://research.cnr.ncsu.edu/agiftseed/>). 🌲



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From Climate Data to Adaptive Insight: Impacts of Climate Change on Christmas Tree Farming in Southern Ontario

BY KELSEY LEONARD¹, ALISON CLARKE¹, CASEY CLUNAS², FRANCES DELANEY², AND RYAN SMITH²

¹Christmas Tree Lab, School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

²Canadian Centre for Climate Services, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

Across Canada, growing and harvesting Christmas trees is an important seasonal tradition—but changing climate conditions are reshaping where and how these trees can thrive. Christmas tree farms are more than just seasonal decor; they are part of Canada's ornamental horticulture sector, and a component of the agricultural sector, which saw a total of \$3.24 billion in annual sales in 2024¹. Despite their classification as ornamental, these trees play a key role in carbon sequestration by maintaining continuous carbon storage through standing trees and soils. In addition, Christmas tree farms support biodiversity, rural economies, and Canada's global exports.

While growing conditions vary across regions, many growers are contending with warmer temperatures, shifting growing seasons, and more variable weather. Because Christmas trees require six to twelve years to reach maturity, these long production cycles increase the trees' exposure to changing climate conditions, pests, diseases, and extreme events.

¹Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2024). *Statistical Overview of the Canadian Ornamental Industry, 2024*.

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/sector/horticulture/reports/statistical-overview-canadian-ornamental-industry-2024>

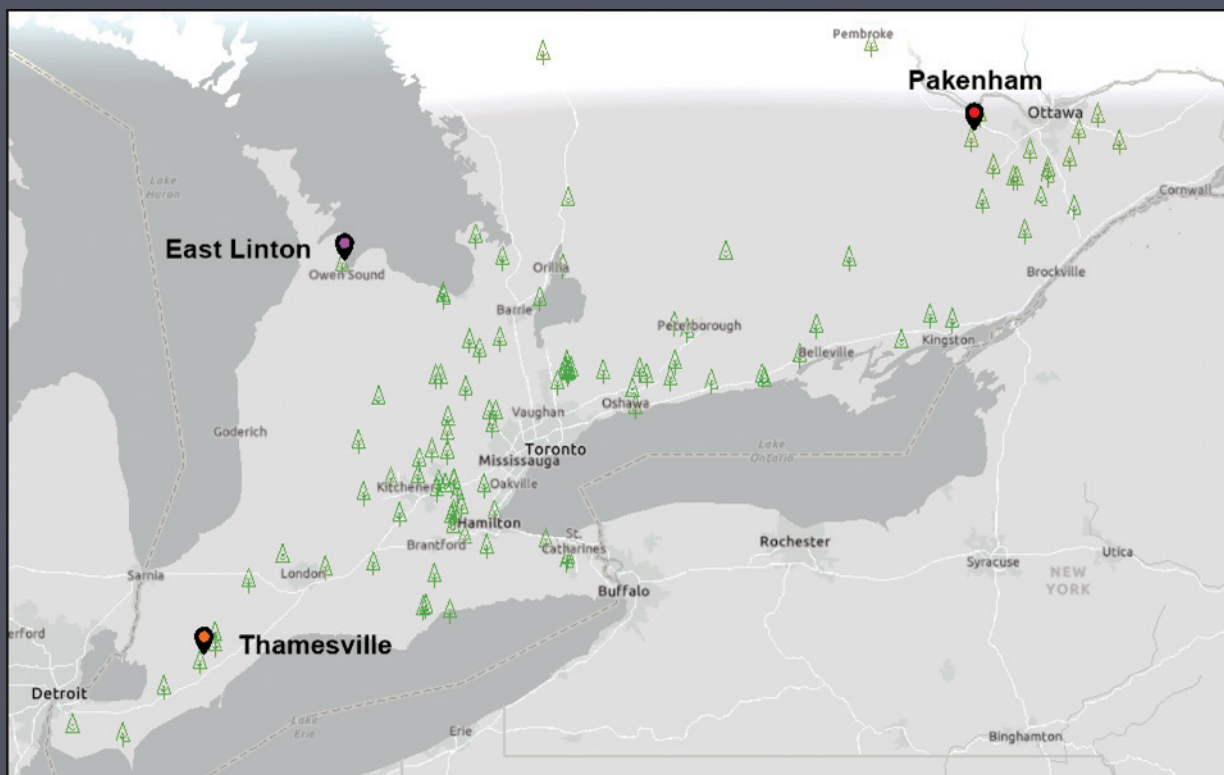


Figure 1 – Map of Christmas Tree Farms in Southern Ontario and Three Christmas Tree Farm locations in Southern Ontario that were considered as part of this article. Thamesville, East Linton, and Pakenham, ON.

Christmas Tree Farming in Southern Ontario

Southern Ontario is a major Christmas tree-producing region in Canada, with several hundred farms distributed across the area from Windsor through the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and east toward Kingston and Ottawa.

Southern Ontario supports a mix of Christmas tree species – including white spruce, balsam fir, Fraser fir, and Scotch pine – each responding differently to heat, moisture, and soil conditions. The region's warm summers, long frost-free period, and variable precipitation patterns make site factors such as drainage, soil texture, and exposure especially important for establishment and growth. While many farms operate successfully under these conditions, southern Ontario sits near the warmer edge of the suitability range for several

traditional Christmas tree species. This makes shifts in temperature, moisture, and seasonal patterns a central consideration for long-term planning as the climate continues to change.

How climate change impacts Christmas tree farms

A warming climate is reshaping growing conditions for Christmas trees, affecting suitability, seasonal extremes, and pest dynamics. The sections below summarize the main climate-related challenges for growers.

1. Shifting climate zones

In Figure 2, the green area represents the **core climate range** for white spruce – the conditions under which the species tends to grow most vigorously across its natural distribution. The brown area indicates the broader **climate range**, where the species is still

capable of surviving or being successfully cultivated, though growth may be slower or more variable.

Across its natural range, white spruce occupies a wide variety of climates – from the cool, short-season environments of the western subarctic to the longer, warmer summers of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence region. In southern Ontario, where Christmas tree farming is well established, historical climate conditions sit near the warm edge of this distribution (the left panel in Figure 1). While white spruce is highly adaptable, growth performance is closely tied to temperature, moisture availability, and growing-season length. Guidance for Christmas tree producers reinforces this, noting that white spruce tends to grow best on cool, moist, well-drained sites, while hot, dry, or poorly drained conditions can reduce growth and quality even where the

²Natural Resources Canada. (2025). *Canada's Plant Hardiness Site, Species-specific Models and Maps. Picea glauca (Moench) Voss.* <https://www.planthardiness.gc.ca/index.php?phz=p10007941971-2000&s=b&speciesid=1000794&m=7&lang=en#>

³Natural Resources Canada. (2025). *Canada's Plant Hardiness Site, Species-specific Models and Maps. Picea glauca (Moench) Voss.* <https://www.planthardiness.gc.ca/index.php?phz=p10007941971-2000&s=b&speciesid=1000794&m=7&lang=en#>

⁴Koelling, M. R., Heiligmann, R. (1993). Recommended Species for Christmas Tree Plantings In the North Central United States. *Forest Ecology and Management.* https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/234/84938/Recommended_Species_for_Christmas_Tree_Plantings-optimized.pdf

Historical Range (1971-2000)²

Future Range (2041-2070, SSP5-8.5)³

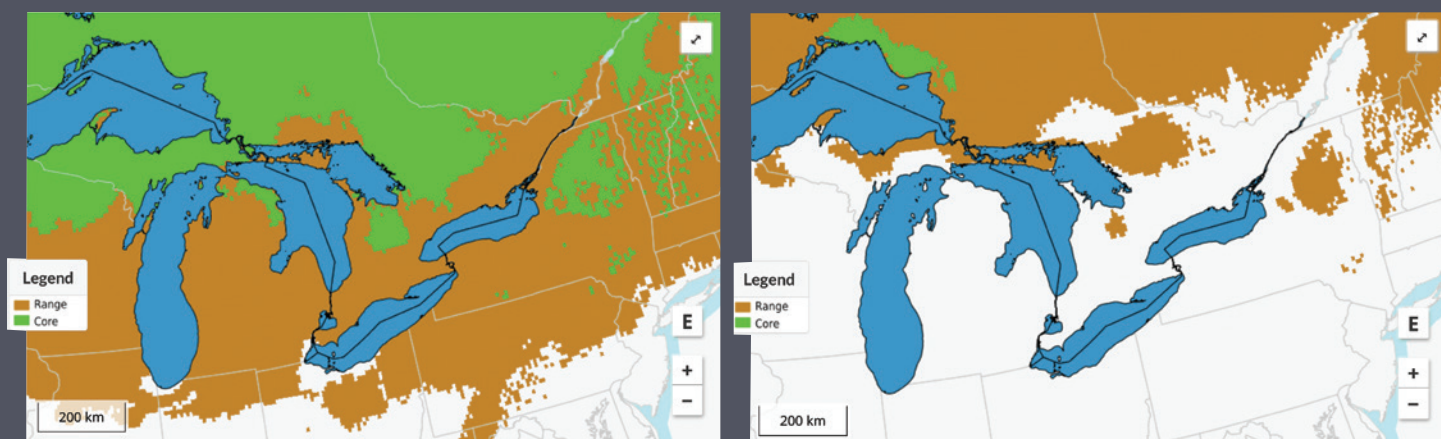


Figure 2 – Historical (1971-2000) and future (2041-2070, SSP585) ranges of *Picea glauca* (Moench) Voss (white spruce).

species can survive⁴. Looking ahead to 2041–2070 under a high-emissions scenario (the right panel in Figure 1), the suitability range for white spruce is projected to shift northward. For most

of southern Ontario, and much of the northern United States, future climate conditions are expected to fall outside of the species' optimal range. To provide a clearer, locally relevant basis for

understanding future climate projections, Table 1 focuses on climate variables previously used in white spruce growth studies in southern Ontario and Quebec.

Table 1 – Climate Conditions for Three Christmas Tree Farm locations in Southern Ontario

Characteristic	Historical Climate Conditions* (1971-2000)			Future Climate Conditions* (2041-2070 – High Emissions Scenario)		
Location	Thamesville, ON	East Linton, ON	Pakenham, ON	Thamesville, ON	East Linton, ON	Pakenham, ON
Mean annual temperature (°C)	8.9	6.8	5.9	11.9 to 14.4	10.0 to 12.5	9.2 to 11.6
Maximum annual temperature (°C)	13.3	11.2	11.3	16.3 to 18.9	14.3 to 17.0	14.5 to 16.9
Minimum annual temperature (°C)	4.5	2.4	0.5	7.6 to 9.7	5.6 to 8.1	3.9 to 6.3
Frost-Free Season (growing season) (days)	179	160	145	205 to 240	191 to 227	163 to 196
Degree Days above 10°C	1429**	1051**	1144**	1882 to 2504	1449 to 2066	1552 to 2128
Annual Precipitation (mm)	929	1084	926	951 to 1037	1129 to 1207	996 to 1059
Summer total precipitation (mm)	240	235	243	201 to 250	200 to 249	228 to 264

*30-year average data from ClimateData.ca for Thamesville, East Linton, and Pakenham, Ontario.

**Projected historical degree days (SSP585) 50th percentile.

⁴Andalo, C., Beaulieu, J., Bousquet, J. (2005). *The impact of climate change on growth of local white spruce populations in Quebec, Canada.* <https://www.ccf-cfr.ca/uploads/Colloque/LectureBeaulieu.pdf>

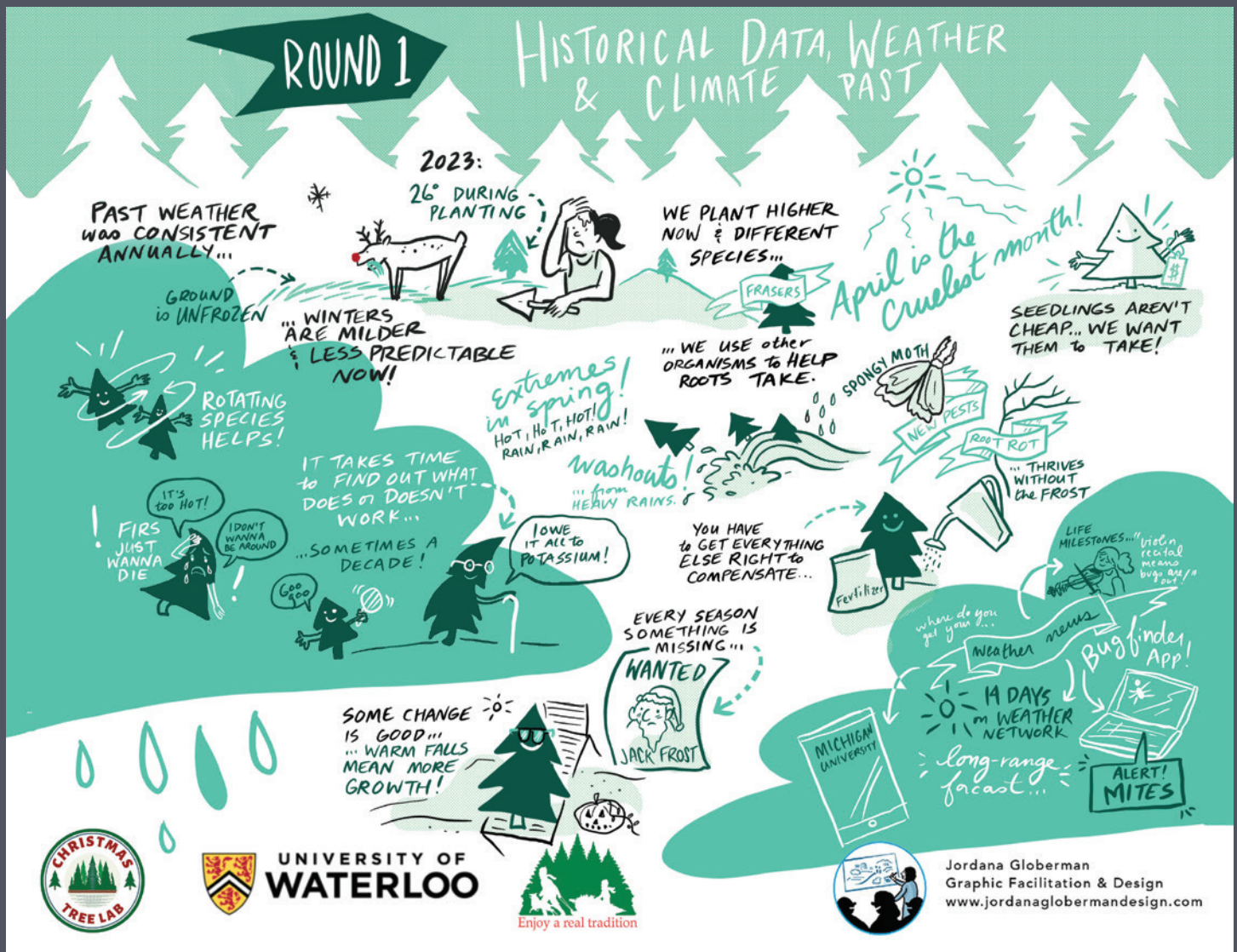


Figure 3.1 – Visual note board of a Christmas tree grower workshop event hosted by the Christmas Tree Lab, covering historical data, weather, and the climate past for Christmas tree growing in comparison to the current conditions. Workshop hosted by the Christmas Tree Lab, August 6, 2024, visual note recorded by Jordana Globerman.

All three locations are projected to become warmer, with longer growing seasons, greater degree day accumulation, and slightly higher annual precipitation by 2041–2070 under a high-emissions scenario. These shifts generally point toward more favourable conditions for heat-tolerant species (and less favourable conditions for cold-climate species). These projections also indicate that heat stress is likely to be more of an issue, precipitation will be more variable, and there is higher potential for summer droughts even when annual precipitation remains the same or increases. These

projections of future climate are used to produce the panel on the right of Figure 2, which indicates climate conditions in Southern Ontario will become less suitable for white spruce.

2. Extremes and severe weather

Severe weather events – such as heat waves, flooding rains, drought, and high winds – present challenges for growers across agricultural and forestry sectors, including Christmas tree growers. Extreme heat events, for example, pose a serious threat to trees, especially young ones^{6,7}.

Meanwhile, changes in precipitation patterns – whether excessive rainfall or prolonged drought – can stress trees and alter soil conditions, affecting overall farm productivity.

Drought and extreme weather events are also impacting Canada's Christmas tree species. Some species are more drought-tolerant than others, but prolonged dry spells can still be devastating. Canadian growers are seeing drought impacts including mature trees suffering from browning needles, while seedlings develop shallow root systems that are

⁶Still, C. J., et. al. (2023) Causes of widespread foliar damage from the June 2021 Pacific Northwest Heat Dome: more heat than drought. *Tree Physiology*. <https://academic.oup.com/treephys/article/43/2/203/6972261>

⁷Christmas Tree Lab. (2025) Protecting Ontario's Christmas Tree Industry from Increasing Climate Change Risks. *Waterloo Climate Institute Policy Brief*. https://uwaterloo.ca/climate-institute/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/2025_policy-brief_leonard_final_compressed.pdf

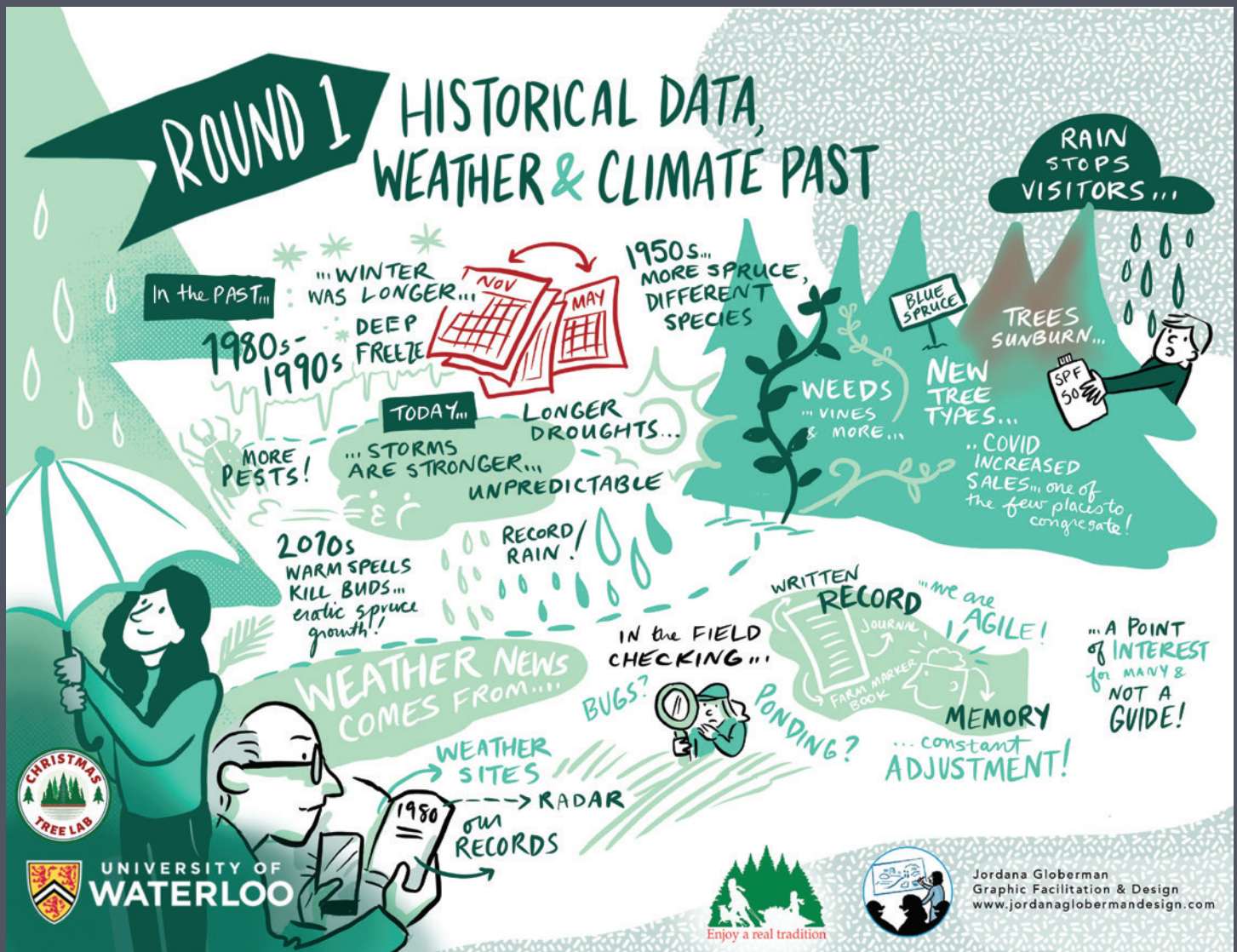


Figure 3.2 – Visual note board of a Christmas tree grower workshop event hosted by the Christmas Tree Lab, covering historical data, weather, and the climate past for Christmas tree growing in comparison to the current conditions. Workshop hosted by the Christmas Tree Lab, July 23, 2024, visual note recorded by Jordana Globerman.

vulnerable to events like flooding. In addition, intense storms and heatwaves can damage or destroy crops, and in some regions, the risk of wildfires adds another layer of uncertainty (See Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

3. Pests and Diseases

Warmer winters, longer growing seasons, heavy precipitation, and wetter than normal conditions all contribute to rising pest pressures on Christmas tree farms. In many regions across Canada, increases in pest and disease pressures are already being observed.⁸

University of Waterloo's Christmas Tree Lab. The unique challenges facing Christmas Tree growers require targeted research and solutions. The Christmas Tree Lab is a dedicated research lab and a key resource for growers, aiding in applied research to help increase the resilience and growth of the industry in Canada.

Temperature is a key driver of insect development: while each species requires a certain amount of accumulated heat to

complete its life cycle, the rate and timing of development vary with seasonal temperature patterns.

This is where Growing Degree Days (GDD – a measure of accumulated heat above a certain temperature threshold– become a valuable climate variable for growers. By calculating GDDs, growers can estimate the timing of key biological events such as egg hatch, larval development, or disease infection, which in turn informs more effective pest control strategies.⁹ For instance, the Balsam Twig Aphid, a common pest for

⁸McCarthy, P. C., Adam, C. I. G. (2023) *Insects and Diseases of Balsam Fir Christmas Trees*. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/rncan-nrcan/Fo103-2-226-eng.pdf

⁹Ontario Crop Protection Hub. (n.d.) Degree-Day Modeling. Retrieved December 1, 2025 from <https://cropprotectionhub.omafra.gov.on.ca/supporting-information/apples/pest-management/degree-day-modeling>



Sophia Bos
ART & ILLUSTRATION

Figure 4 – Illustration of aphids, a common pest species on Christmas trees. Illustration by Sophia Bos, 2024.

Christmas trees in Canada, becomes most damaging during its second generation, typically emerging after 150–200 GDDs above 10 °C have accumulated.^{10,11}

As the climate warms, the total number of GDDs above critical thresholds is expected to increase, potentially allowing multiple pest generations in a season or shifting their emergence

earlier in the year.¹² This could not only exacerbate current pest pressures but also introduce new pests to regions where they were previously not viable.

A wrap on the holiday season

As climate conditions continue to shift, Christmas tree farmers are working proactively to manage emerging challenges – from heat stress and

drought, to pests, diseases, and more frequent extreme weather. Climate data projections can help growers anticipate risks, adjust management practices, and build greater resilience into their operations. Ongoing adaptation will be essential to maintain a sustainable supply of Christmas trees, along with the rural economies and ecosystems that depend on them.

¹⁰McCarthy, P. C., Adam, C. I. G. (2023) *Insects and Diseases of Balsam Fir Christmas Trees*. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/rncan-nrcan/Fo103-2-226-eng.pdf

¹¹Fondren, K., McCullough, D. G., (2002) *Biology and Management of Balsam Twig Aphid*. Michigan State University Extension. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/files/e2813.pdf>

¹²Climate Atlas of Canada. (n.d.) *Forest Pests and Climate Change*. Prairie Climate Centre. <https://climateatlas.ca/forest-pests-and-climate-change>



Figure 5.1 – Recycled Christmas trees being prepared to be layered into a stream restoration effort by capturing sediment and rebuilding the stream wall's strength. Event hosted by Conservation Halton, August 2024, photo taken by Alison Clarke.



Figure 5.2 – Recycled Christmas trees secured into the streambank restoration structure. Event hosted by Conservation Halton, August 2024, photo taken by Alison Clarke. 🌲

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Series: How to get the most out of your weed management program in Christmas tree production?



Managing Herbicide Resistance In Weeds

SUSHIL GREWAL, GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT, DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



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

Introduction: A Problem We Can't Ignore

If you've been growing Christmas tree for a while, you've probably noticed it, certain weeds just aren't dying the way they used to. Even after a solid herbicide application, some still push through, competing with your tree crop and making production practices more frustrating. That's not just coincidence or poor application. It's likely herbicide resistance, and it's becoming more common across agricultural landscapes. To be precise, two hundred and twenty weed species around the world have developed resistance to common herbicides, and the problem is getting worse. Some weeds can now survive multiple types of weed killers, leaving growers with fewer control options. In Christmas tree production system, common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) (Fig



Figure 1 – Stinger (clopyralid) resistant common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) whose seeds were collected by MSU Plant and Pest Diagnostics, and it was grown at MSU greenhouse for research purpose. Photo credits: Debalina Saha, MSU Horticulture.



Figure 2 – Horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*) is one of the most problematic weed species which has become resistant to Roundup (glyphosate) in Christmas tree production. Photo credits: Debalina Saha, MSU Horticulture.

1) and horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*) are two examples which have become resistant to Stinger (clopyralid) and Roundup (glyphosate) herbicides, respectively. No new herbicides with fresh ways of killing weeds have been developed in over 30 years, and stricter regulations are removing older ones from use. As a result, herbicide-resistant weeds are spreading fast (Heap, I. 2014). The good news is that this problem, while serious, is manageable. And more importantly, it can often be prevented. This article takes a practical look at what causes herbicide resistance, how to keep it off your farm, and how to deal with it if it's already there. Through integrated weed management, there's a solution to every problem.

Understanding Herbicide Resistance

At its core, herbicide resistance happens when a weed survives a chemical application that used to kill it. Over time, if the same kind of herbicide or the herbicide with same **mode of action** is used again and again, the more resistant weeds survive and reproduce. Eventually, they make up a big part of the population which will become a major management issue (Perotti et al,2020). There are a couple of ways this resistance shows up. According to Riechers et al 2024, in some cases, the weed may change the part of its biology where the herbicide is supposed to act, this is called **target-site resistance**. In other situations, the plant finds a way to block the herbicide or break it down before it can do any damage. This is known as **non-target-site resistance**. Either way, the outcome is the same: more herbicide-resistant weeds and fewer easy solutions. **Cross-resistance** (Torra et al,2021) critical concept in weed science, occurs when a single genetic or biochemical change in a weed provides resistance to several herbicides, typically those that share a similar site or mode of action. There are two main types:

- **Target-site cross-resistance (TS-CR):** Caused by mutations in the herbicide's target enzyme, leading to resistance against all herbicides that act on that site.
- **Non-target-site cross-resistance (NTS-CR):** Involves mechanisms like enhanced metabolism or reduced herbicide uptake, which can confer resistance to herbicides with different modes of action.

How Resistance Develops in the Field

Resistance doesn't happen overnight. It builds slowly, often unnoticed at first. A few resistant weeds might survive a spray one year and go to seed. The next year, their offspring survive again, and within just a few growing seasons, those resistant plants can dominate the field. The most common cause of this is the

repeated use of the same herbicide or herbicide mode of action year after year, especially without rotating crops or using other weed management strategies.

There are several other practices that can unintentionally encourage resistance. Sticking with a single crop for multiple years in a row makes weed cycles more predictable and easier for them to adapt to. However, this might not be applicable to Christmas tree production systems as crop rotation is not possible as the trees take 8-10 years' time to reach its harvestable size. Relying solely on herbicides without incorporating tillage or mechanical methods allows resistant weeds to gain ground. Even skipping scouting or delaying application timing can lead to weeds getting too large to control effectively. And underdosing, applying below the labeled rate can leave some weeds alive, giving them another opportunity to pass on resistance traits.

Keeping Resistance Off Your Farm

The most effective way to manage herbicide resistance is to prevent it from ever developing. That means building a weed control program that doesn't rely entirely on herbicides. Prevention is a lot easier and cheaper than trying to clean up a resistance problem later.

According to Prather et al,2000, one of the most powerful tools is **rotating herbicides** with different modes of action. Each herbicide works in a specific way, and switching between them makes it harder for weeds to adapt. Just as important is **rotating crops**. Different crops support different growing conditions and weed management strategies, which helps disrupt weed life cycles. Another smart practice is using cover crops. These can shade the soil, outcompete early emerging weeds, and reduce the weed seed bank over time. By shading the soil and growing quickly in early spring or fall, they help suppress weed emergence and limit the need for chemical control. Similarly, mulching whether organic

mulches like straw or crop residues, or synthetic weed barriers can block sunlight and prevent weeds from germinating and growing. **Regular scouting** is also essential. By walking your fields and checking for weed escapes after herbicide application, you can identify potential resistance problems early when they're still manageable by looking for weedy patches in patterns consistent with application problems and **hand-weed** patches that are not in patterns consistent with application problems. Always perform **Good Farming Practices** (GFP's) like Applying herbicides at the **proper timing** and rate as when you cut rates or spray too late, you're giving weeds a fighting chance to survive and adapt. **Solarizing** the soil once a year not only kill the weed seeds but also the overwintering bacterial and fungal pathogens, using **certified seeds and seedlings** ensures clean seed with no mixtures and **clean equipment**. Depending on your operation, including some mechanical control, by **cultivating** such as occasional tillage or inter-row cultivation, can also help keep resistance in check. The more varied your approach, the harder it is for weeds to outsmart your system.

What to Do If Resistance Is Already in Your Fields

If you've already spotted herbicide-resistant weeds in your fields, all is not lost but action is needed quickly. The goal shifts from prevention to containment and suppression. First, it's important to correctly identify the resistant weed species and confirm which herbicides it no longer responds to. This can help avoid wasting time and money on ineffective treatments. It is recommended to contact your county Extension educator who can help in sending samples to Michigan State University Plant and Pest Diagnostics laboratory to get confirmation of herbicide resistance development. At that point, stop using the herbicide that's no longer working. Continuing to

apply it just encourages resistance to build even more. Instead, use a **new herbicide** with a different mode of action and, if possible, combine that with other control methods such as cultivation, mulching, mowing, or targeted hand removal in smaller areas. In some cases, using a tank mix with multiple effective herbicides can help get the problem back under control, though label directions and compatibility must always be followed.

Another key step is to manage the weed seed bank by **Good Farming Practices (GFP's)**. That is through -

- The use of clean equipment to prevent those resistant weeds from going to seed is critical as combines and tillage tools can easily carry resistant seeds from one area to the next.
- Always enter fields with resistant weeds last, after completing work in all other fields. This helps prevent the transfer of resistant weed seeds on your clothes or equipment to clean fields.

- Watching for the small weed patches that appear in the same place in the next crop.
- Controlling weeds suspected of herbicide resistance before they can produce seed.
- This might include late-season control, post-harvest spraying, or other practices aimed at minimizing seed returns.

Conclusion

There's no one-size-fits-all fix for herbicide resistance. It's a complex issue that calls for a comprehensive, flexible approach. That's where integrated weed management comes in. By combining chemical, cultural, and mechanical controls, farmers can stay ahead of resistance, maintain the effectiveness of existing herbicides, and protect the long-term productivity of their land. Herbicide resistance might seem like a frustrating setback – but it doesn't have to be a dead end. With careful planning and commitment to diverse management strategies, Christmas tree

growers can tackle this challenge head-on and come out stronger on the other side.

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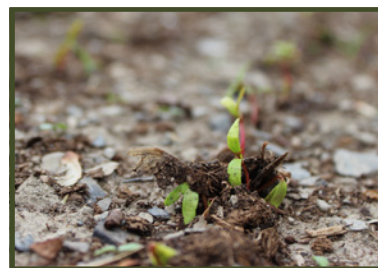
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Age	Size	100 - 499	500 - 1000
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Abies balsamea ~ Balsam Fir

* 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 ~ Canaan 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 "Glaucous" ~ 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
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Age	Size	100 - 499	500 - 1000
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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

Thuja occidentalis ~ American Arborvitae [Eastern White Cedar]

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2-1 / 3-1	10 - 16"	2.25	1.95

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REGIONAL NEWS ILLINOIS

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Rob Richardson,
President
815-527-1881
robandcarol
@richardsonfarm.com

Dave Hoover,
Vice President
309-362-2436
1oldairybarn@gmail.com

Cathy Stahl, Treasurer
309-712-9425
cinnamontreefarm2014
@gmail.com

Carol Richardson,
Secretary –
Corresponding
309-212-0901
robandcarol
@richardsonfarm.com

Emily Grady,
Secretary – Recording
309-645-7642
gradyrobert@sbcglobal.net
bobandemmy@msn.com

Wendy Richardson,
IL NCTA Director
847-567-3540
georgeandwendy
@richardsonfarm.com

Robert & Emily Grady
Agent of Records/Archives
309-362-2292
gradyrobert@sbcglobal.net
bobandemmy@msn.com

Joey Daniken
Past President
618-410-9701
jdaniken77@yahoo.com

BOARD MEMBERS

Bill Holesinger
309-887-4892
bholesinger
@frontiernet.net

Harold Tanner
309-249-3140
hitanner@nbsmail.net

Rod Stahl
309-712-9245
cinnamontreefarm
2014@gmail.com

George Schaaf, Jr.
708-417-3032
gschaafjr@gmail.com

ILLINOIS CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

We got our first snow Saturday, November 8th, and I forgot just how cold and windy it could be. About November 3rd, we started making wreaths and garland, and the ladies have been working steadily since then. The outside crew is going through all the wagons and getting the shakers and balers out and ready for Black Friday. Our trees look pretty good this year; although, we could have used a little more rain in the last few months.

The summers seem to be getting a little hotter and dryer, and I've been listening to more of you talk about mulching the younger trees to hold the moisture and perhaps keep them cooler. I couldn't see how I could mulch our many trees by hand, so I've found a small row mulcher that will fit down my 7-foot rows and can also be used to spread fertilizer. I'm anxious to try it out and let you know how it works for us next summer.

We closed our corn maze just before Halloween; and while it was a pretty good year, our attendance was down significantly from the year before. I'm not sure exactly why that was. We did have a couple of wet days in October, but I wonder if people are watching their spending a little more closely because of the uncertain economy. I've always thought of Christmas trees as being recession proof, so we'll just have to wait and see what this year is like. Let's hope for the best, and we can exchange stories at the winter meetings.

Good luck and stay safe!

Robert Richardson, ICTA President 🌲

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OFFICERS & DIRECTORS – INDIANA CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

OFFICERS:

Zach Young, President
lostmiletreefarm
@gmail.com
765-635-1103

Andrea Lux
Vice President
andlux@msn.com
317-604-0620

Michael Walsh
Secretary-Treasurer
info@indiana
christmastrees.com
215-292-2159

Dana Dull, Past-President
dana@dullstreefarm.com
765-325-2418

Lucas Dull
National Director
lucas@dullstreefarm.com
765-894-6026

Rachel Stine
rachel@oakhill.events
765-366-1988

Rachael Hardwick
pineyacresfarm.rachael
@gmail.com
317-340-4410

Judy Maley
coessechristmastrees
@gmail.com
260-402-7472

Tom McClure
thomaslmcclore
@icloud.com
219-363-5878

Erin Wagner
genthtreefarm
@gmail.com
812-350-8431

Doug Ream
ream@node1internet.com
812-249-5272

DIRECTORS:

Lori Genth
genthtreefarm@gmail.com
812-521-1124



INDIANA WINTER UPDATE

ICTGA Members Spread Holiday Cheer Across Indiana

As the selling season ramps up, Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association (ICTGA) members have not only been preparing their farms for the rush—they've also taken time to give back in meaningful ways. Many growers paused their busy schedules to support community-centered initiatives such as Trees for Troops and the Indiana Statehouse Christmas Tree Program.

This year, the ICTGA proudly placed 14 live Christmas trees throughout the Indiana Statehouse and the Governor's

Residence. These beautifully decorated trees brought holiday spirit to a variety of public spaces and offices, including those of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Treasurer, State Comptroller, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, and the Division of Forestry.

A total of 11 member farms contributed trees to the 2025 Indiana Statehouse Christmas Tree Program, showcasing the generosity, craftsmanship, and dedication of growers across the state. Their efforts ensured that Indiana's leaders, staff, and visitors could experience the warmth and tradition of locally grown Christmas trees throughout the holiday season. 🌲



REGIONAL NEWS IOWA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – IOWA CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Larry Isom, President (541) 757 9817 isomlarry@yahoo.com	Reid Bermel (515) 867-4926 tallgreeniowatrees@gmail.com
Justin Pritts, Vice President (712) 261-0400 countrypinestf@gmail.com	Megan Hill (858) 344-3080 meg.e.hill@hotmail.com
Korey Johnson, Secretary (319) 361 9634 Wickiuptreefarm@gmail.com	Ryan Pfantz (641) 750-8921 vpchristmastreefarm@gmail.com
Joe Heinz, Treasurer (515) 460-4340 heintzjoseph20@gmail.com	Website https://www.iowachristmastrees.com



NEWS FROM IOWA

President's Message

At the time of this writing, we're in full swing getting everything ready for the sales season. I'm sure that looks a bit different for each of you, but we've all shared in the usual mix of beautiful days, cold winds, and even some snow. 'Tis the season!

The ICTA Board met the first weekend in November at Strautman Tree Farm, the location of our 2026 meeting. We reviewed progress on our committee programs and our Board of Directors' work plan.

A few highlights from the work plan include documenting some of our procedures – such as the Treasurer's duties and the State Fair responsibilities – and forming an awards committee to recognize those who do so much for our organization.

One recurring topic is education. We discussed its importance for staying current with new and ongoing challenges in growing trees, as well as promoting our farms as the go-to places for quality and expertise.

To continue strengthening our communication, we encourage more activity on the ICTA Facebook page. It's a great place to ask questions, share ideas, and get feedback from fellow members. If you're working on something related to our industry that others might benefit from, please share it! And if you're facing a challenge, don't hesitate to post – it's likely others have similar experiences or insights to offer.

Finally, if you're interested in volunteering, your help is always appreciated. Please reach out to me – I'd love to hear from you.

Larry Isom

Porchpots and Other Decorations

While Christmas trees are undoubtedly the main attraction for a Christmas tree farm, the additional handmade items have become their own business and attraction to many. There are so many creative ideas outside of the traditional wreath. Iowa Christmas Tree Association has some very talented individuals who have developed their own significant contributions to sales. Here are just a few pictures of their creativity!

Capital Trees

Every year, the Iowa Christmas Tree Association donates Christmas trees to the Capital complex and the Department of Agriculture. There is a committee that scouts out potential





Christmas trees for this and delivers and sets up the trees to the capital. Around a week later, there is a lighting ceremony that is open to the public. Mike White has donated trees to the capital for over 20 years and did so again this year! Thank you Mike! Reid Bermel, Mike White, and Paul Ovrem are pictured here setting up the trees. 🌲



REGIONAL NEWS KENTUCKY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – KENTUCKY CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Kim Miller, President
859-808-0414
futurecom3@yahoo.com

Jon Bednarski,
Vice President
502-649-8706
sherwoodacrestrees@gmail.com

Kenney Gulley,
Secretary
859-585-6637
kenney_gulley@yahoo.com

Michael Duckworth,
Treasurer
859-948-9794
mglennduck@gmail.com



KCTA membership has voted and accepted this new logo design.

GREETINGS FROM KENTUCKY!

KCTA would like to thank Tommy Wagoner, Fraser Knoll for his support and attendance at the KCTA fall meeting. He brought many ordered items as well as set up a retail booth to benefit our member farms in attendance and offer savings to them. Other vendors are welcome.

The 2026 Kentucky Christmas Tree Association spring meeting is set for Saturday, April 25, at the Fayette County Extension Office. The plant auction begins at 10 am EST with lunch and a 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 students this year with Jessica La Brie and Ella Sides 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.



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Just a reminder of how the auction works. KCTA members bring plant material (trees, shrubs, flowers, hanging baskets, etc) to the auction. 50% of the proceeds go 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. 🌲



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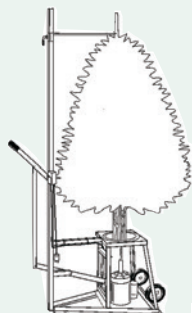
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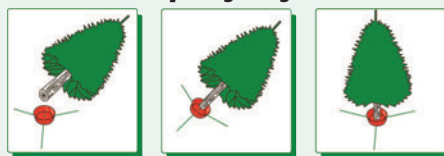


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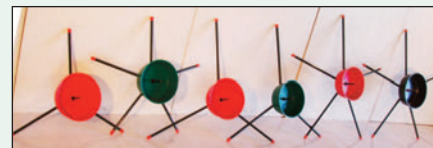
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REGIONAL NEWS MARYLAND

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President Charles Cawley 410-829-4781 charles.cawley@gmail.com	Director Ryan Fair 443-858-6515 rkfair02@gmail.com
Vice President Stefan Nock 410-357-1235 prettyboyfarms@gmail.com	Director Mike Gaver 301-865-3515 GaverTreeFarm@aol.com
Secretary Jim Waller 410-357-5266 jimcwall@comcast.net	Director Rob Hammond 216-287-8580 rhammond@salter-inc.com
Treasurer & National Director Joncie Underwood 443-553-1814 joncie6@hotmail.com	Director John Hickey 410-708-3054 j.w.hick@icloud.com
Past President Mehrl Mayne 301-810-5767 maynestreefarm@comcast.net	



Starting them young.

GREETINGS FROM MARYLAND!

Hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. By the time you read this, another Christmas will have come and gone and we hope you had a successful sales year. So Merry Christmas from MCTA.

It is quite frigid here in Maryland with snow in the forecast for western portions of the state. It seems as if it will be a cold winter. As I write this, we are coming off our first two weekends of sales. So far, we seem to be on par with last season so that is promising. With the economy as it is, I was a little concerned customers would not have money for real trees. We have had a mix of returning customers with some new ones. Off the lot our main seller is the Canaan Fir followed by the Douglas Fir. Once again, we brought in pre-cut Fraser firs from North Carolina. Unfortunately, we have had to discard a number of trees with split trunks and we are not sure the cause. We have unknowingly sold some of those in the past and learned they do not hold water.

For the first time ever, our family decided to participate in the local Halloween parade. We figured we did not have time to put together a float for the Christmas parade, so for the center piece of the float we used our sleigh which is our main photo prop for our customers. Our Christmas float brought up the rear of the parade and it seemed like viewers enjoyed our float. Unfortunately, Santa could not attend due to rain between Maryland and the North Pole. Nonetheless, we handed out candy canes and wished the recipients a "Merry Halloween." It was fun and we may do it again next year. We met a young couple who moved here from Arizona who said they would come check us out. A fun way to get our name out there prior to the season.

We hope that you all had a great tree season and Happy Holidays

Charles Cawley, President, MCTA

p.s. Save the Dates:

Winter Meeting – February 28

Summer Meeting – June 27

Looking Back As We Move Forward

Fifty years ago, the Maryland Christmas Tree Association published its first newsletter. (See picture.) It was carefully typed on a typewriter. Today, our news is disseminated through email and the Great Lakes Journal. MCTA recently updated its website to allow potential customers to more easily find farms near them. Members will also be able to update their own information.

One section of the first newsletter was a Q&A. Following is an excerpt:

Q: What is the advantage of being a member of MCTA?

A: The Maryland Christmas Tree Association provides members a mechanism to effectively promote the Christmas tree industry in Maryland, to exchange ideas, and to plan cooperative group efforts that will help the production and marketing of Christmas trees.

Maryland Xmas Tree Assoc. Newsletter



Vol. I, Edition 1

July 1, 1975

In this, our first attempt at a newsletter for the Maryland Christmas Tree Association, we hope to improve communication with each of the individual members of the association. We sincerely welcome and solicit any and all articles concerning our industry which we can publish in subsequent issues. Questions submitted by you are probably the same questions of interest to other members and an effort will be made to provide an answer to all inquiries.

Reminder—We need your participation to make a strong showing of Christmas trees on display at the State Fair late this summer.

John P. Theofield, Jr.
President

First Newsletter

REGIONAL NEWS MARYLAND



Santa Arrives

Q: What are the MCTA dues, and how does one go about joining?

A: MCTA dues are \$8.00 a year. Members, subject to MCTA Board of Directors approval, are persons engaged in any phase of the Christmas tree industry.

Q: What agency, if any, of the State of Maryland is working with MCTA?

A: The MD Dept. of Agriculture's Division of Marketing works closely with MCTA in expanding and developing new markets for the Maryland tree industry. In the past, the division secured federal funding to enable the state to initiate a marketing program with MCTA. Part of this program included the publication of the "Choose and Cut" Christmas tree brochure in cooperation with the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service. 🌲



Halloween Parade

REGIONAL NEWS MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – MASSACHUSETTS CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Peter Sweet Jr., President
413-528-6002

Seth Cranston, Treasurer
413-628-0090

Sara Davagian, Secretary
413-512-0907

Directors:

Matt Campbell
781-254-6958

Greg Davagian
508-865-3413

Sherry Deane
717-991-5195

Darlene Hussey
978-597-6891

Christine Ingraham
978-394-7832

Kathy Jacobs
860-508-9418

Robert Schrader
413-687-1806

Beverly Westerveld
781-545-0659



Attendees at the Deane Family Christmas Tree Farm Tour in September

MASSACHUSETTS WINTER 2026 UPDATE

Farm Tour at Deane Family Christmas Trees

The last farm tour of our 2025 meeting series took place in September at **Deane Family Christmas Tree Farm** in Bernardston, MA. **Sherry Deane** hosted a group of approximately 15 members at her farm that started small but has been expanding in recent years. The group discussed seedling stock, tree varieties, planting and pruning practices, disease issues, and the challenges of growing Christmas trees without an irrigation system.

Sherry shared that as a small grower she was a bit nervous about hosting a meeting and showing her operation to others who have been growing commercially for longer than she has, but she was glad she did and appreciated the great discussion, encouraging comments and tips shared during the tour. We are always looking for new hosts to hold meetings, so please reach out to Pete Sweet, Jr. to learn more – we'd love to have new volunteers for the 2026 meeting series.

Big E Results

The 2025 Big E Agricultural Fair took place September 12th - September 28th and we had many MCTA members represented in the Christmas tree competition. Congratulations to **Cranston's Tree Farm** who took home 3 ribbons including 1st place pine, 2nd place spruce, and 2nd place fir as well as Reserve Champion & Massachusetts State Champion designations. **Kogut's Hemlock Hills Tree Farm** earned 1st place fir as well as Grand Champion & Connecticut State Champion. **Taproot Tree Farm** placed 1st in the spruce category and earned the 2nd Reserve Champion title. **Seekonk Tree Farm** took home 3 ribbons including 2nd place pine, 3rd place spruce and 3rd place fir. **Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm** took home 2 ribbons placing 5th in both the spruce and fir categories. Congratulations and thank you to all participants. This is always a fun exhibit and a favorite attraction of fairgoers – even though it's only September many visitors can be overheard talking about their favorite tree and Christmas traditions.

2025 "Green Friday" Ceremony

Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm was honored to host the 2025 Green Friday ceremony, officially opening the 2025 Christmas tree season. Gov. Maura Healey declared Friday, Nov. 28 as "Green Friday" and State Agricultural Commissioner Ashley Randle, along with other state and local officials, celebrated the declaration with the ceremonial cutting of a Christmas tree at Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm in Hatfield, MA. 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 Green Friday declaration highlights the important impacts agricultural farms and small businesses have on our economy, environment and local communities.



2025 "Green Friday" ceremony hosted by Chestnut Mountain Christmas Tree Farm



Big E Competition 1st place fir & Grand Champion grown by Kogut's Hemlock Hills Tree Farm

otherwise might go unsold due to color, shape or missing branches.

- Some growers noted an uptick in sales on greenery products such as kissing balls and wreaths.
- A few farms opened the weekend before Thanksgiving to help alleviate the Black Friday crowds that most growers experienced. Several farms have already closed after the first three days of the season, having exhausted their inventory of marketable sized trees.
- Having other events at different seasons, such as hosting photography sessions, weddings, music events and food trucks, for example, helped some farms boost exposure and expand their Christmas tree customer base without the need for much of an advertising budget.

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.

2026 Meeting Series – Save the Date!

We're excited to announce that we have already secured a date and host for our 2026 annual meeting. Based on feedback from some members, we have swapped days with CT this year and will be holding our meeting on a Saturday. More details will follow in next quarter's newsletter, but please save **Saturday, August 8th** in your calendars for the MCTA meeting which will be hosted at **Arrowhead Acres** in Uxbridge, MA. A big thank you to **Dave Morin** for volunteering his farm to host this event.

We still have a lot of work to do planning the agenda, so if you have input or ideas for topics, guest speakers, or vendors please let us know. We're also still looking for a couple of volunteers to host the informal ½ day farm tours. Please reach out to our President and Meeting & Events Director, **Pete Sweet, Jr.**, at petersweetjr@yahoo.com if you'd like more information about hosting or have feedback to provide. 🌲

2025 Sales Season

On Monday after Thanksgiving the board hosted the annual virtual roundtable so members could debrief, share experiences, and discuss trends they saw on opening weekend. These were a few of the highlights:

- Growers who attended reported mixed sales results compared to last year. Some were down 15% while others were up 30%. A few reported sales were flat, selling nearly the exact number of trees as last year. For farms that experienced reduced sales, limited tree inventory, economic belt tightening, and inclement weather on Sunday were cited as possible reasons for the downturn.
- Another theme had growers finding ways to increase income in simple ways such as selling brush bundles that might otherwise be scrap or given away for free, and offering bargains on 'unique' trees that

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REGIONAL NEWS MICHIGAN

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Tony Stefani, President
517-673-9035
Tony@hillsidechristmas
treefarm.com

Jessica Korson
Vice President
989-289-3926 jesskor-
son@gmail.com

Blake Sherburne
Secretary/Treasurer
231-885-1542
blakesherburne
@gmail.com

Scott Powell, National
Director at-large
231-920-2610
scott@dutchmantree
farms.com

Kevin Morhland
Director at-large
269-217-6740
kmohrland@gmail.com

Kyle Getty
231-878-0113
getty1ka@gmail.com

Tyler Kluck
989-781-1650 ty-
lerkluck
@klucknursery.com

Ken Wahmhoff
269-303-9810
ken@mitrees.com

Dr. Bert Cregg,
Educational Advisor
517-614-4406
cregg@msu.edu

Bill Lindberg
Michigan State Univer-
sity Extension Christ-
mas Tree Educator
lingde35@msu.edu

Amy Start,
Executive Director
517-545-9971
info@mcta.org



Loading the trees for Trees for Troops.

HAPPY NEW YEAR, MCTA MEMBERS!

Get ready for a **great year of learning and networking**. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for the following 2026 meetings:

- **MCTA Winter Meeting:** Friday, February 27, 2026, at the Bavarian Inn and Conference Center in Frankenmuth. Join us for Protecting Your Crop and Planning for Tomorrow! We've got an impressive lineup of expert speakers and engaging sessions. Bring the family and enjoy historic Frankenmuth, Bavarian Inn's updated water park the Bavarian Blast—Michigan's newest indoor water park (four water park passes come with each hotel room), and the Prime Outlets—the largest outlet mall in the Midwestern United States.
- **Summer Meeting:** July 23–24, 2026, at Timberly Tree Farm in Sturgis, MI. Our hosts, Jamie and Sherri Crites, are sure to deliver a good time as we learn about and tour their unique, eclectic choose-and-cut farm. More details coming soon.

Amy Start, Executive Director

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 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 Nursery 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, Dutchman Tree Farms, Janke Tree Farm, Korson's Tree Farms, Tannenbaum Farms, and Wahmhoff Farms Nursery.

A big thank you to FedEx, which transports all these trees to the military bases for FREE.

Congratulations to Korson's Tree Farms!



A Michigan-Grown Tree in the White House!

The Korson Family of Korson's Tree Farms in Sidney, Michigan, delivered the official White House Christmas tree! Their beautiful 19-foot Concolor fir will be on display in the Blue Room. The

Korsons earned the honor by being named Grand Champion in the 2025 National Christmas Tree Contest held by the National Christmas Tree Association. Great to have a Michigan-grown tree in the White House!





2026 Winter Meeting

Protecting Your Crop and Planning for Tomorrow

Join us in exploring science-based strategies for protecting your crop from root rot, abiotic stress, weeds, and pests. In addition, we will cover business sessions focusing on farm labor, accounting, and modern marketing ideas using video and AI, as you start planning for tomorrow's profitability.

Friday, February 27, 2026

Bavarian Inn and Conference Center, One Covered Bridge Lane, Frankenmuth, MI 48734

**Want to stay the night before the meeting to enjoy Frankenmuth and the Bavarian Inn?
Call 1-855-652-7200 to book using group code #13Z2D1**

Four water park passes come with each room.

Registration and breakfast with the vendors begins at 8:00 a.m.

For more information visit www.mcta.org



2026 Winter Schedule

Protecting Your Crop and Planning for Tomorrow

8:00-9:00 Registration and Breakfast with Exhibitors

9:00-9:45 Pratima Devkota, MSU

Root Rot Diseases of Christmas Trees: Phytophthora and Armillaria Under the Spotlight

This presentation will focus on how Armillaria and Phytophthora root rot diseases affect Christmas tree farms and will share plans for upcoming research work to better understand root diseases and guide future management.

9:00-9:45 Dr. Bert Cregg, MSU

Dealing with abiotic injuries in Christmas tree production: When the pest isn't a pest...

Description: Tree injury or death caused by environmental stresses, such as drought, cold, heat, or flooding, are among the most common issues facing Christmas tree producers. Dr. Bert Cregg (MSU) will discuss common abiotic issues in conifers and opportunities to mitigate their damage.

10:00-10:45 Dr. Younsuk Dong, MSU

Research updates from 2025 Christmas tree irrigation experiments

This presentation will highlight key findings from the 2025 irrigation research conducted in Michigan Christmas tree production systems. We will discuss how different irrigation scheduling methods influence tree growth.

10:00-10:45 Kate Dodde, Dutchman Tree Farms

Modern Marketing for Real Trees: AI, Video, and the Power of Your Story

Learn how to make your farm's story stand out using free and simple tools, from the Real Christmas Tree Board's ready-to-use marketing materials to easy AI, and video editing techniques that help you create engaging, authentic content. This session is designed for growers and retailers looking to reach today's customers where they are, on their phones.

KEY: Black General Session, Blue Auxiliary Room

Funding for [Project or Publication] was made possible by a grant/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

11:00-11:45 Dr. Debalina Saha, MSU

Fighting with your toughest weeds in Christmas Tree production? Here is the solution!

Solutions to control some of the toughest weeds such as Horsetail, Maretail, yellow nutsedge, Milkweed, and Horsenettle will be discussed in this presentation. In addition to that, growers can gain information on how to manage weeds by non-chemical control options.

11:00-11:45 Florencia Colella, MSU

Farm Business Management 101

This session will go over things to know to run your farm as a business: recordkeeping, taxes, planning, and budgeting. Special things to consider for tree farms vs other kinds of farms or businesses.

11:50-12:15 MCTA Annual Meeting/Report

12:15-1:15 Lunch with Exhibitors

1:15-2:00

Dr. Zach Rutledge, MSU

Farm Labor Outlook

This presentation will provide an overview of US and Michigan farm labor trends and recent policy changes/proposals.

1:15-2:00

Bill Lindberg, MSU Extension

Invasive insect update: adelgid and scale oh my!

Several significant invasive insect pests have recently been found in Michigan. This session will detail their current status, life cycle, and potential impact on Christmas trees for balsam woolly adelgid, elongated hemlock scale, and cryptomeria scale.

2:15-3:00

End of the Season Review and A Look to the Future– Tony Stefani, Hillside Christmas Tree Farm

3:00-3:30

Marsha Gray, Real Christmas Tree Board Update

3:30-4:00

Surveys and Vendor Happy Hour

4:00-5:00

Choose and Cut and Wholesale Meetings



REGIONAL NEWS MINNESOTA

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GREETINGS FROM MINNESOTA!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I am writing this as we just completed our second weekend of retail sales. The weather has been fantastic this fall for wholesale harvesting and the first weekend of retail sales. We got a bunch of snow last week, and the temperature has fallen rapidly, so hopefully it gets people into the Christmas spirit rather than deterring them.

2025 Summer Meeting Recap

The Summer Meeting down in New Ulm was a success. The total turnout was over 100, including the Guggisberg Family and the 9 vendors. It was fun to see Tony Guggisberg's passion for growing trees. He is the lone tree grower in the middle of the prime cropland surrounding New Ulm. We had great speakers both days, with the feature speaker being Dr. John Ball of SDSU. Friday evening was highlighted by our tour of the August Schell Brewery in downtown New Ulm-the second oldest privately owned brewery in the country. We ate an authentic German dinner followed by some competitive Christmas song trivia. Day two was highlighted by our Second Annual Tree Farmer Olympics. Growers competed in categories of Tree Tying, Tree Throwing, and Trailer Backup. Congratulations to all who had the courage to have a little fun! We also had a successful Silent Auction. Thanks to everyone who donated and spent money, as all the funds went to the MNCTA!

Trees for Troops

Tuesday December 9th is the date of the annual Trees for Troops pickup at Rum River Tree Farm in Oak Grove. It is truly one of the best things we get to do as an organization! This year trees were donated by Crow River Nursery, Turcks Trees, Happyland Tree Farm, B&J Trees, Wolcyn Tree Farms & Nursery, Goldenman Christmas Tree Farm, Red Caboose Christmas Trees, First Bank & Trust, Nebraska Christmas Tree Growers Association, Rum River Tree Farm, and Jan's Christmas Trees. Thank you to all of the growers and organizations who donated



The Turck Family from L to R- Jean, Jesse, Joan, Steve, Nate, and Jessica at the Capitol.

this year! For those who did not donate, I would strongly encourage you to consider doing so next season as it's a great way to say "Thank you" to the men and women who protect our freedoms and our way of life!

State Capitol Tree

Turck's Trees from Litchfield provided a beautiful 17' Balsam Fir tree to the State Capitol Rotunda this year, and Wolcyn Tree Farms & Nursery of Cambridge provided four 10'+ trees to the



The Guggisberg Family From L to R- Brandon, Megan, Matt, Liz, Tony, Jacob, Marie, Emily, Jayson, and Rachel.

Governor's Residence. For the first time this year, MN Grown decided to help cover the cost of these trees, which we are thankful for. They will pay up to \$800 for the Capitol tree, and up to \$600 for the Governor's Residence trees going forward.

2026 Upcoming Conventions

Winter Convention- We are excited to announce that the 2026 Winter Convention will be at the Braham Event Center in Braham, MN on February 20-21st. Our two featured speakers will be Jim Rockis of Reliable Source Seeds & Transplants in Star City, West Virginia, and Beth Ann Bosio- Sales and Marketing at Quarter Pine Farm in Smithfield, Pennsylvania. The agenda will be updated on our website in the coming months, so stay tuned. We look forward to seeing you all there!

Summer Convention

Mark your calendars for September 25-26 for our 2026 Summer Convention which will be hosted by Plants Beautiful Nursery. Plants Beautiful Nursery was founded in 1967 by Ralph Dittberner. The nursery is made up of two farms on about 250 acres, in Parkers Prairie. Their nursery stock is harvested mostly from their White Oaks farm, which has been in the family for over 70 years. William and Anna Dittberner originally purchased The White Oaks farm in 1937. Four of the five generations of Dittberners have lived in the old farmhouse located there. Being



Tree Farmer Olympics Pic: Our first-place winners in our 2nd Annual Tree Farmer Olympics pictured from L to R Melissa Becker, Chris Schultz, Forest Dittberner, Dana Schepers, and Lloyd Lesmeister.

interested in trees, our family started planting Christmas trees in the 60's. In the early 70's the business evolved into more than just a Christmas tree farm, when we started planting trees to sell as nursery stock. Lowell took a special interest in the tree business and studied at the University of Minnesota receiving a degree in horticulture. Today Lowell, his son, Forest, and their families are the managers of the two properties that grow our trees.

New Board Members and Leaders

At our annual board meeting in October, Paul Saunders of Crow River Tree Farm was voted on as our newest President, and I will be moving back to Vice President. I want to give a warm welcome to our newest board members Jesse Hoffbauer of Hoffbauer Tree Farm in Duluth, and Baden Hilty of Happyland Tree Farm in Sandstone. They are both second generation tree growers who have recently come into the business full-time, so we are excited about what they will add to our organization. Jesse's Father Doug served on our board as recently as 2023, and Baden's Grandfather Ken Olson served on the board recently as well.

Ben Wolcyn, MNCTA Vice President 🌲

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WHAT AN EXCITING TIME OF YEAR TO BE A MISSOURI CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION GROWER!

The Governor's Christmas Tree and Wreath

The 2025 MCTA Christmas tree and wreath contest concluded in September. Starr Pines of Booneville (<http://starrpines.com/>) was the winner by unanimous vote of our members. As is the

Missouri tradition, they will be able to present a Christmas tree to the Governor's mansion this year. In conjunction with the tree, voting for the best wreath was held, and the winner will also be presented to the Governor. Live cuttings are only allowed for the presentation of these beautiful wreaths. Route 24 Farms



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in Wellington (<https://www.facebook.com/Route24Farm/>) was this year's champion. Congratulations to our winners!

Preparing for the Season

The fall in Missouri, like last year, was very dry. There were some late-summer rains, which curbed the effect, and there

should be an abundance of beautiful trees ready to sell, and growing for future seasons. As most producers open just after Thanksgiving, this season began with some unusual winter weather after turkey day, with significant snowfall occurring statewide. Despite the challenging driving conditions, the association is off to a great start and had some aesthetic help with the beautiful snowfall.

Upcoming Winter Meeting

The MCTA winter meeting will be held on January 17th. For the first time in a long time, we are changing the location. This year, our winter meeting will be in Columbia at the Boone County University Extension Office. We thank the Missouri Conservation Credit Union, which has graciously let us use their conference room over the years. We look forward to our new venue with the Mizzou extension. The county extension offices provide many services to farmers, growers, etc., such as soil analysis, classes on various aspects of agriculture, and a treasure trove of materials and information, all designed to help agriculture succeed in Missouri. To access these services, you can go to this link: <https://extension.missouri.edu/> Information about the upcoming meeting can be found on the association's website: <https://missourichristmastrees.org/>



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Communications Director	Website ctfany.org ,
518-567-7655	email info@ctfany.org
petersweetjr@yahoo.com	



CTFANY SEASONAL UPDATE: WINTER 2025

Season's greetings! With selling already underway, the Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York is pleased to share that despite pockets of challenging weather, many member farms have reported strong opening weekends and enthusiastic customer turnout across the state.



Bell's Christmas Trees in Accord

On November 24, Bell's Christmas Trees in Accord hosted the inaugural NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets tree-cutting ceremony. Commissioner Richard Ball, the Bell family, and local officials (including our CTFANY President, Michael Naccarato) gathered to celebrate New York-grown trees and the kickoff of the holiday season.

An 8-foot Fralsam fir was selected for display at the Hudson Valley | Catskills Welcome Center.

Looking forward to warmer weather, we encourage all growers to save the date for our 2026 CTFANY Summer Meeting,

happening July 16–18. More information (including location) will be available soon.

We also have some executive position updates to share, in addition to Michael Naccarato being elected CTFANY President earlier this year. Our Vice President and NCTA Representative is Dave Hicks, our Treasurer is Marcia Hicks, and Dave and Marcia are collectively serving as Interim Executive Directors.

The Grants Committee is made up of Michael Naccarato (Chair), Paulie Drexler, and Marcia Hicks. Our Website Committee includes Tom Daly (Chair), Peter Sweet Jr., Marcia Hicks, and Jim Carpenter, and the Staff Search Committee includes Tom Daly (Chair) and Michael Naccarato.

Planning our summer meeting are Michael Naccarato (Chair), Dave & Marcia Hicks, Peter Sweet Jr., and Brian Skeval. Mike Naccarato, Brian Skeval, and Lisa Naccarato are also on the Scholarships Committee.

With the holidays in full swing, we're delighted to spotlight some of the growers bringing holiday magic to communities across New York and the surrounding areas:

Treetop Acres in Lockport, NY

owned and operated by Patrick, Elizabeth, Emmarie (& Pierogi) Barczys (see photo above)

Treetop Acres is a growing 22-acre Western New York Christmas tree farm with great roots, and a rich 35-year history. Having purchased the farm in 2024, the Barczys family is expanding its offering of premium varieties, including Fraser, Canaan, and Concolor firs, while helping families create new Christmas traditions with memorable farm experiences.



Naccarato's Trees and Wreaths in Washington County, NY

owned by Michael & Lisa Naccarato and family

Michael Naccarato and his family started making wreaths and selling precut trees in Kingston, NY. 15 years ago, and 3 years ago they purchased a 45-acre former dairy farm in Washington County, where they are expanding wreath and precut tree sales while planting and nurturing 2,000 - 2,500 trees each year.



Seekonk Tree Farm

Owned and operated by the Sweet family in Great Barrington, MA, just across the state line. Peter Sweet Sr. started his Christmas Tree Farm as a hobby in 1978. Today, Peter and his two sons, Pete Jr. and Chris, work together with their families to maintain over 40,000 trees on 21 acres. As a family, they take great pride in their sustainable growing practices and commitment to the environment. The Sweet's are longtime CTFANY members and Pete Jr is a Current Board Member and Communications Director.

Wishing everyone a productive, successful, and joyful holiday season and a wonderful start to 2026!

Liz Barczys, CTFANY Board of Directors



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Matthew Perdulla
Pioneer Trails Tree Farm
Perdulla.insurance
@gmail.com
330-330-0533

Amy Galehouse
Galehouse Tree Farms
Galehousetreefarms
@Bright.net
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Jeff Greig
Greig Tree Farm
Greigchristmastrees
@Gamil.com
440-487-7158

Gary Hite
Scioto Prairie Farms
Heartvesttime
@Marion.net
740-225-5472

Alan Binger
Hidden Pines Christmas
Tree Farm
Hiddenpinesclyde
@gmail.com
419-355-3650

Bev Keener
Timbuk Farms
Bev@Timbuk.com
740-328-9272

Joel Berry
Twinsberry Tree Farm
berrytree1@gmail.com
330.567.3902
Cell: 330-201-6471

Roger Koch
Koch Christmas Trees
Kochtrees@gmail.com
513.593.2735

Jeff Bielek
Iwla Wayne County
Chapter
Jeff.bielek@gmail.com
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Pictured with the Governor's tree are, left to right: Adam Heffron, Valerie Graham, Doug and Ingrid Greig, and Lisa and Jeff Greig, along with Brian Baldridge.

GREETINGS FROM THE BUCKEYE STATE

While Ohio's Christmas tree growers are in the heart of the busy season, we recently took time to send some Christmas cheer overseas. Operation Evergreen once again brought holiday cheer to American troops overseas, sending 50 Ohio-grown Christmas trees to Kuwait along with handmade decorations and letters from supporters across the state. Thanks to Amy Galehouse for her leadership and dedication to this project for 31 years.

OCTA also had the honor of presenting the official Christmas tree for the Ohio Governor's Residence this season. The winning tree was provided by Greig Tree Farm the winner of the Christmas Tree Contest at the Ohio State Fair (July). Governor DeWine and his family will enjoy the Canaan fir for the holiday season.

Presentation attendees included:

- Valerie Graham, OCTA Executive Director
- Brain Baldridge, Director of Agriculture
- The Greig Family including Jeff, Lisa, Doug, and Ingrid
- Adam Hefner, Manager of the Ohio State Fair

We congratulate Greig Tree Farm for representing Ohio growers with excellence.

Upcoming OCTA Events for the Association include:

OCTA Winter Meeting: February 21, 2026

Quest Center, Columbus, Ohio

Featured Topics at the meeting include:

- Tax Update
- The Use of Credit Cards
- Agritourism & General Liability
- Legacy Preservation

OCTA Summer Meeting: June 26–27, 2026

Feisley Tree Farm in Belmont County

Join us for two days of education, networking, and hands-on learning with fellow Ohio growers.

Stay Connected with OCTA :

Website: ohiochristmastree.org

Facebook: Ohio Christmas Tree Association

REGIONAL NEWS OHIO



The Greigs also made a wreath for the front door of the Governor's home.



Ornaments are packaged to place in each box of trees.



FFA members who assisted are being provided with an educational opportunity as ODA inspectors explain what they are looking for.



Adma Heffron and Doug Greig, front, and Brian Baldridge and Jeff Greig in the back carry the 9 ft Canaan fir into the Governor's mansion.



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AROUND THE ONTARIO REGION

Over the past year, the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario (CTFO) has continued to advance key priorities and strengthen its role within the broader agricultural sector. The association remains actively engaged with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), participating in ongoing meetings and initiatives. Our status as a commodity member has provided valuable support and access to resources that continue to benefit our membership.

Progress also continues through our ongoing collaboration with the **Christmas Tree Lab at the University of Waterloo**. This partnership is moving forward as planned, supporting research and innovation aimed at improving production, sustainability, and sector resilience.

At the 2025 Annual Field Day, the association approved the hiring of a Social Media Content Creator to oversee all CTFO social media platforms. With the support and contributions of CTFO members, the association has already seen increased visibility and improved dissemination of educational and promotional content related to real Christmas trees.

In addition, the Executive Director participated in a full-day video production session with Ontario Wood and



representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). This project supports the development of a promotional video for **National Christmas Tree Day**, observed annually on the first Saturday in December. The video is being produced in partnership with the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Natural Resources, Ontario Wood, and the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario.

Upcoming Events

- Annual General Meeting: March 27, 2026 – Somerville Nurseries
- Annual Field Day: August 15, 2026 – Foxhollow Tree Farms

Submitted by Shirley Brennan Executive Director



Just horsing around on the farm



REGIONAL NEWS ONTARIO



Shirley Brennan Executive Director and Adriana Pacitto from Ontario Wood



Jason Huck from Hockley Valley Farm being interviewed



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NEWS UPDATE FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Message from the PCTGA President, Gerrit Strathmeyer

A big thank you to the Berkey family and team for hosting the Pennsylvania summer meeting. It was held from August 14th to the 16th at their nursery in Spartansburg, PA. With direction and coordination from Melissa Holby, Gary Thomas, and Aaron Grau we were able to put together an educational and fun experience for everyone in attendance. There was a great turn out of existing and new members from PA along with growers from neighboring states, New York, Ohio, New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia. It is always great to see younger growers and "seasoned" growers having discussions and sharing ideas. Those connections are a big part of what keeps our industry moving forward in the right direction. Also, a big thank you to our presenters for taking time out of their busy schedules to help educate us. It goes without saying, but without their expertise we would not be where we are as an industry so thank you.

As for the weather in Pennsylvania, the summer decided to turn off the water faucet for the months of July, August, and September. It was opposite of what we received in the spring months, which was almost too much rain in certain regions. The added challenge is that it is now back-to-back years with multi-month drought like conditions. Most growers experienced the usual spring planting survival struggles because of the drought; however, we are seeing some growers with larger trees being affected as well. This is mostly just drought stress causing some discoloration in needles. But to the positive, with a good winter these should recover and be back to their normal, growth and color patterns. As we all know trees are a very hardy plant and the overall sentiment from growers is inventory will continue and supply will be plentiful.

Congratulations to Beth Bossio of Quarter Pine Tree farm for receiving the Christmas Spirit Award. In 2018, the Christmas Spirit Foundation trustees formalized their recognition of individuals, companies, and organizations for superlative support of the Trees 4 Troops program. This honor is represented by the



Christmas SPIRIT Award, which is annually bestowed upon selected recipients to thank them for their creative and extraordinary support. Congrats again Beth! Speaking of Trees 4 Troops, Pennsylvania will have 4 growers participating as pick up locations for Trees 4 Troop donations: Bustards Tree Farm, Kenny's Tree Farm, Yenser's Tree Farm, and Strathmeyer Christmas Trees. Thank you for all that participate!

Our winter meeting will be held again in Boalsburg, PA at the Wyndham hotel. The dates will be February 5th and 6th. Have a Merry Christmas everyone!

Encouraged to Support National "Trees 4 Troops" Campaign

The PA Trees for PA Heroes program, traditionally facilitated by the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association (PCTGA) in partnership with the Pennsylvania National Guard, is an effort to bring holiday cheer to service members and veterans in need. Each year, the program organizes the donation and distribution of fresh Christmas trees, ensuring that those who have served our country can enjoy a festive and heartfelt holiday season with their families.

Unfortunately, due to staff changes at the Pennsylvania National Guard and a shortage of resources resulting from the ongoing government shutdown, the PA Trees for PA Heroes program will not be able to take place this year. This difficult decision reflects the unique challenges facing the program's organizers and partners, who remain committed to supporting military families and veterans despite these setbacks.

While the Pennsylvania-based program is on hiatus, the PCTGA encourages Christmas tree growers across the state to

participate in the national “Trees 4 Troops” campaign, operated by the National Christmas Tree Association. This nationwide initiative continues to deliver trees to military bases and veterans throughout the country. Growers interested in learning more or finding out how to get involved can visit www.treesfortroops.org for details and participation guidelines.

PCTGA Unveils “Ask-An-Expert” Online Information Exchange for Members

The Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association (PCTGA) is excited to announce the development and launch of a new online service designed exclusively for its members. The “Ask-An-Expert” information exchange was created as a direct response to member feedback, highlighting the need for a dynamic platform where growers can seek advice, share experiences, and address challenges unique to Christmas tree production.

This innovative service will serve as a valuable membership benefit, connecting new and seasoned growers across Pennsylvania. By facilitating dialogue, the platform allows users to post questions, offer solutions, and discuss a range of topics—from pest management and soil health to marketing strategies and regulatory compliance. The goal is to foster a collaborative environment that promotes continuous learning and professional growth among association members.

PCTGA encourages all members to take advantage of the “Ask-An-Expert” feature, whether you’re just starting out or have decades of experience. By leveraging the collective expertise of the association, members can more effectively address issues, adopt best practices, and ensure the continued success and sustainability of Christmas tree farming throughout the state.

Spotlight on the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers at the 2026 Pennsylvania Farm Show

The 2026 Pennsylvania Farm Show is set to take place from January 10 to January 17, 2026, at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center in Harrisburg, PA. As the nation’s largest indoor agricultural exposition, the event offers a vibrant showcase of Pennsylvania’s farming heritage, innovative exhibits, live demonstrations, and family-friendly activities. For detailed schedules and visitor information, attendees are encouraged to visit the official website at www.farmshow.pa.gov.

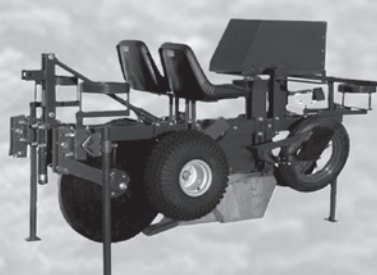
Among the highlights of this year’s Farm Show is the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association’s annual tree and wreath contest, where growers from across the state compete to present the most

beautiful and perfectly shaped Christmas trees and wreaths. Visitors can join in the excitement by viewing the winning entries and discovering what makes a champion tree and wreath. Beyond the contest, the Association offers engaging the public to answer questions about growing Christmas trees and wreathmaking. These opportunities foster open dialogue and knowledge-sharing between experienced professionals and those interested in our industry, making the Farm Show a welcoming space for all who share a love for Pennsylvania’s holiday traditions and agricultural excellence. 🌲



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Evergreens Inc.
715-536-3800
cwetree@hotmail.com

Dan Hansen
Vice President (2028)
Hansen Christmas Trees
920-622-3872
dhansen64@gmail.com

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Hann's Christmas Farm
608-843-1393
hannsfarm@hanns
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Joey Swanson
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Nursery
920-883-7267
swansonsevergreen
nursery@gmail.com

Carol Iczkowski (2026)
High Ridge Acres LLC
715-630-8244
info@highridgeacres.com

Dennis Carlson (2027)
Swan's Christmas Trees
715-240-0509
dcarlson1@ur.com

Dean Lemke (2027)
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Evergreens Inc.
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deancwe@gmail.com

John Grutza (2028)
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Mike & Lisa Stoffel teach mayors from Poland about planting and care techniques for sustainable Christmas tree production in Wisconsin.

WINTER NEWS UPDATE FROM WISCONSIN

As the 2025 holiday season unfolded, Wisconsin's Christmas tree industry showcased its reach, relevance, and craftsmanship – from international diplomacy to statewide education and prominent holiday displays in the state's capitol city. The Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association (WCTPA) and its member farms played a central role in elevating Wisconsin-grown evergreens across local, state, and even global stages.

Wisconsin Christmas Trees Take the Global Stage Through International Leadership Exchange

The WCTPA reached an international audience this winter when a delegation of Polish mayors and deputy mayors visited The Christmas Tree Farm in Bloomer as part of the U.S. Congressional Open World Program. The exchange positioned Wisconsin growers on a global stage – highlighting rural development, sustainable agriculture, and small-farm innovation.



Mike Stoffel guides the U.S. Congressional Open World Program polish delegates through rows of evergreens while sharing insights about Wisconsin's tree-growing practices.

The Official First Tree Cutting by Alice in Dairyland Launched the 2025 Holiday Season

Wisconsin's 78th Alice in Dairyland, opened the holiday season with the Official First Tree Cutting at Newby's Evergreen Farm. Nearly 95 fourth-grade students attended, toured the farm, and observed live harvest demonstrations. The long-standing tradition highlights the partnership between WCTPA, DATCP, and local farms to promote Wisconsin-grown trees and agricultural literacy.



Ken Ottman and Becky Sniegowski of Newby's Evergreen Farm with Alice in Dairyland for Wisconsin's official first tree cutting



30-foot balsam fir from retired growers Dave and Mary Vander Velden is donated to the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda Room



WCTPA Executive Director, Sarah Glitto (right) with donated 27-foot balsam fir for the Wisconsin Governor's Executive Residence by retired growers Dave and Mary Vander Velden



Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers with Grand Champion Tree Contest winner Dennis Carlson of Swan's Christmas Tree Farm in the Governor's conference room at the State Capitol



Co-Grand Champion Wreath Contest winners Angela Schaefer and Linda Garbelman of 4 Mile Tree Farm at the Wisconsin Governor's Executive Residence



Co-Grand Champion Wreath Contest winners Ken Ottman and Becky Sniegowski of Ottman Family Farm at the Wisconsin Governor's Executive Residence

Wisconsin-Grown Trees & Greenery Shine in the State Capitol and Governor's Residence

Across Madison, WCTPA members contributed a series of prominent holiday displays that showcased the quality and craftsmanship of Wisconsin-grown evergreens.

State Capitol Rotunda & Governor's Residence Trees

Two Wisconsin-grown balsam firs (upwards to 30' tall!) were harvested in Gillett for the State Capitol Rotunda and the Governor's Executive Residence. Donated by retired growers Dave and Mary Vander Velden, the trees were harvested with support from the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association.

Governor's Conference Room Tree

The 2025 WCTPA Grand Champion Tree Contest winner, Swan's Christmas Tree Farm, provided a premium Christmas tree for Governor Tony Evers' Conference Room inside the State Capitol, continuing the tradition of showcasing champion-grown Wisconsin trees in prominent state settings.

Grand Champion Wreaths at the Executive Residence

The 2025 Co-Grand Champion Wreath Contest winners, 4 Mile Tree Farm and Ottman Tree Farm contributed their handcrafted wreaths to the Governor's Executive Residence, where they were displayed as part of the official holiday décor.

Together, these contributions highlight Wisconsin growers' leadership, craftsmanship, and statewide visibility during the holiday season.

WCTPA's 2026 Winter Convention is Making a Splash in the Waterpark Capital of the World!

Join us at the WCTPA Winter Convention, January 19–20, 2026, held within the statewide Growing Wisconsin Conference at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. The event draws nearly 500 attendees and features seven educational tracks, hands-on workshops, and a robust tradeshow.

This year's theme, CREATING REAL VALUE, anchors the Christmas Tree Track—built to help growers strengthen operations, make informed decisions, and apply practical tools to your farm right away.

Session highlights include:

- The War on Weeds
- Gnome Sweet Gnome wreath & greenery workshop
- Planting to Harvest Panel
- Worker Protection Standards
- Marketing & community outreach strategies
- Annual Wreath Contest

Keynote speaker Andrew McCrea—national broadcaster, author, and fifth-generation farmer—will deliver both a keynote and a hands-on workshop focused on agricultural success and leadership.

With roundtables, networking opportunities, and access to the full Growing Wisconsin lineup, growers will benefit from cross-industry expertise. Attendees also enjoy Kalahari's amenities and receive four waterpark passes, making the 2026 Winter Convention an exceptional opportunity for learning, connection, and industry collaboration.

Visit bit.ly/2026winterconvention for more info!





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