

MICHIGAN CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION SUMMER MEETING 2026

July
23-24
2026



2026 Schedule of Events

Hosted by Timberly Tree Farm • 66181 N Lakeview Rd • Sturgis, MI 49091

Thursday Indoor and Outdoor tracks will rotate
“Green” and “Blue” groups with concurrent auxiliary sessions.

Thursday, July 23

Indoor Track: Morning Sessions

9:00 – 9:45 am: **Consumer Insights for Christmas Tree Growers: Key Findings and Implications** – Kevin Chastagner and Lauren Hearit, Hope College. This session presents findings from a statewide consumer research study conducted as part of a multi-year project supported by the Michigan Christmas Tree Association. Attendees will learn how consumer values, life transitions, and household characteristics shape preferences among both real and artificial tree buyers. The session also explores implications for promotional messaging and customer targeting.

9:45 – 10:30 am: **Growing Forward: The Future of the Real Christmas Tree Board** – Marsha Gray, Executive Director, RCTB. With an expected positive referendum outcome and over a decade of industry support, the RCTB is focusing on its next chapter. Marsha Gray will share insights and lead a discussion on the future of real Christmas trees and the evolving role of the Board.

10:30 – 10:45 am: **Break**

10:45 – 11:30 am: **Chemical Mowing as an Integrated Weed Management Strategy for Michigan Christmas Tree Production** – Debalina Saha, Michigan State University. Explore the efficacy of chemical mowing as an alternative to repeated herbicide use. This study evaluates potential phytotoxic effects on Canaan fir, Fraser fir, Norway spruce, and Scotch pine.

11:30 – 11:45 am: **NCTA Update**

11:45 am – 1:30 pm: **Lunch | Exhibitors | Tree Contest Voting**

Outdoor Track: Morning Sessions

9:00 – 9:45 am: **The “How-To’s” of Growing and Selling Christmas Trees at a Choose-and-Cut Farm** – Jamie Crites, Timberly Tree Farm. Jamie Crites will discuss all aspects of production, including planting, weed control, and nutrition. Additional topics include managing customer flow and lessons learned from a decade of retail sales.

9:45 – 10:30 am: **Disease Management in Christmas Tree Production** – Dr. Gary Chastagner, Washington State University. Dr. Chastagner will discuss key fungal pathogens, including signs, symptoms, environmental influences, and control options to improve crop health.

10:30 – 10:45 am: **Break**

10:45 – 11:30 am: **From Raindrop to Runoff: Water Movement on Common Christmas Tree Farm Ground Covers** – Sarah Zeiler, MSU Extension. A demonstration of runoff and infiltration across different ground covers, highlighting steps growers can take to improve soil health and water quality.

11:30 – 11:45 am: **Land Clearing Demonstration**

11:45 am – 1:30 pm: **Lunch | Exhibitors | Tree Contest Voting**

2026 Schedule of Events continued...

See descriptions for sessions on previous page.

Indoor Track: Afternoon Sessions

- 1:30 – 2:15 pm: Debalina Saha (MSU)
2:15 – 3:00 pm: Marsha Gray (RCTB)
3:00 – 3:15 pm: Break
3:15 – 4:00 pm: Kevin Chastagner and Lauren Hearit (Hope College)
4:00 – 4:15 pm: NCTA Update

Outdoor Track: Afternoon Sessions

- 1:30 – 2:15 pm: Jamie Crites (Timberly Tree Farm)
2:15 – 3:00 pm: Dr. Gary Chastagner (WSU)
3:00 – 3:15 pm: Break
3:15 – 4:00 pm: Sarah Zeiler (MSU Extension)
4:00 – 4:20 pm: Land Clearing Demonstration

Thursday Evening Events

- 4:30 – 6:00 pm: Surveys, Happy Hour, and Vendor Time
6:00 pm: Dinner, Grower Hall of Fame and Tree and Wreath Contest Awards



Friday, July 24

8:00 – 9:30 am: **Vendor Time**

9:30 – 10:15 am: **Seedling Grower Planting Panel** – Moderated by Dr. Bert Cregg, MSU. Bring your questions to a panel of expert seedling growers. Topics include selecting the best planting stock and managing pests such as white grubs and conifer root aphids. *Panelists: Dan Wahmhoff (Wahmhoff Farms), Josh Peterson (Peterson Riverview Nursery), Chad Fields (PRT Growing Services, LTD)*

10:15 – 11:00 am: **Backpack Sprayer Calibration** – Lyndon Kelly, MSU Extension and Brenden Kelley, MSU Extension. Accurate calibration is essential to prevent over- or under-application. This live demonstration shows how to calibrate equipment for precision results.

11:00 – 11:15 am: **Break**

11:15 am – 12:00 pm: **Tree Planting and Establishment Panel**– Moderated by Bill Lindberg, MSU Extension. Industry growers discuss successes and failures with various planting equipment and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies for weed control. *Panelists: Jamie Crites (Timberly Tree Farm), Jason Buher & Mel Koelling (Tannenbaum Farms), Bruce Millar (Top Hill Farms).*

12:00 pm: **Meeting Concludes**

Auxiliary

Thursday

9:00 – 9:45 am: **Gift Shop Strategy: From Inventory to Inspiration** – Becca and Sherri Crites – Take a tour of Timberly Tree Farm's impressive two-story gift shop. Whether you are looking for tips on inventory management and buying strategies or simply want fresh ideas to elevate your holiday decor displays, this session offers a behind-the-scenes look at their successful retail operation.

10:00 – 10:45 am: **Ribbons, Bows, & Bottom Lines: Maximizing Your Materials** – Every inch of ribbon purchased is an investment. In this practical, hands-on session, you will learn creative bow-making techniques to eliminate waste, utilize every spool, and keep more money in your pocket. Bring your scrap ribbon stash and leave with finished pieces and fresh ideas.

Note: Please bring your own scissors and scrap ribbon.

11:00 – 11:45 am: **Wreath Decorating on Dime** – Discover creative ways to decorate wreaths using scrap ribbons, bows, and other materials to maximize your holiday revenue.

1:30 – 2:15 pm: **The North Pole Team: Creating a Great Seasonal Staff Experience** – Christian Voorhies – Peacock Road Family Farm – This session is designed to brainstorm strategies for managing seasonal "holiday help." The goal is to transform temporary workers into a festive team that enhances the customer experience while maintaining farm efficiency.

Friday

9:00 – 9:45 am: **How to Host Profitable Wreath-Making Workshops**– Sherri Crites and Becca Crites – Hosting interactive classes is another way to draw customers while building community at your farm. In this session, we will explore the "dos and don'ts" of organizing wreath-making workshops. Learn how to seamlessly incorporate these fun, interactive events into your seasonal offerings.

10:00 – 11:00 am: **The Art of Specialty Cookie Decorating** – Hannah Murphy – Elevate your farm hospitality with professional cookie-decorating techniques. Join a pro decorator to learn the secrets of specialty cookie design, then put your skills to the test by creating a few edible masterpieces of your own.

11:00 – 11:45 am: **Concessions – From Trees to Treats** – Nothing beats a hot drink and a tasty snack on a cold winter day. But is the extra effort worth the reward? Join this round-table discussion on what sells, where to buy, how much to stock, and more.

Schedule is subject to change.

Project titled: Understanding and Managing Armillaria and Phytophthora Root Rot in Michigan Christmas Tree Plantations - SCBG 260000000028 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.

