



# Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

June 2006

## *Special points of interest:*

- ◆ **Group Insurance Discount:**  
The NHVTCTA recently negotiated a group insurance benefit package for its members with the Co-operative Insurance Companies, based in Middlebury, Vt. See page 12, and the insert in this issue of *Tree Line*, for details and the location of an agent near you.
- ◆ **50th Anniversary Meeting:**  
Mark September 28-30, 2006, on your calendar. That's when we'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Association at The Tonry Farm, Hampton Falls, N.H.

- ◆ **Seeking Marketing Members:**  
The NHVTCTA marketing committee is in urgent need of assistance, especially in organizing the gazebo and in helping to organize fair participation. Contact chair Walt Rockwood at (802) 685-2282.

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## June Meeting: Christmas Trees of Vermont

The NHVTCTA summer meeting will take place on June 24, at Christmas Trees of Vermont in Springfield, thanks to the generosity of hosts Peter, Sandra and Tim Mollica.

Registration will take place from 8:30-9:30 a.m., with an Association business meeting to follow from 9:30-10:15. After that, the educational sessions will begin and include the following subjects:

"From wholesale to retail: A quantum leap," by Peter Mollica.

"Pesticide pumps and spray nozzles: differences to be aware of," presented by OESCO.

"All those cones: a round-robin discussion of the factors

that stimulate cone production; the impact on marketability, and how to cope with the challenge."

Field tours will include herbicide and pest stations, and will describe impact of multiple generations of Fraser fir production and interplanting on river-bottom cornland.

Specifically, presentations will offer a close look at:

"Herbicide program: 25 years of experience," by John Ahrens.

"Christmas tree pests: foliar insects, ants, and root rot," by Barbara Burns.

"Layout and operation or retail sales area," Peter Mollica.

There's still time to register; call Jim Horst at (802) 447-1900.

## NCTA: Biennial Convention slated for Oregon

The National Christmas Tree Association will hold its 24th Biennial Convention & Trade Show against the scenic backdrop of the Pacific Northwest. The convention will take place Aug. 16-19, 2006, in Portland, Oregon and is hosted by the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association.

Whether you're a small choose and cut farm or a major grower, there are sessions and speakers planned for all of your interests. Some of our planned topics include: selecting fertilizers, family farms business management, agri-tainment, the latest on taxes, Web marketing, grading and inventory, choose and cut industry issues, quaran-

tines and invasive species, boughs and greens, and more.

Don't forget to stop in at the trade show, where the latest products and services will be on display and you can network with others in the industry.

You will have the opportunity to see firsthand the technology and innovation of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree industry with four

exceptional farm tours. From the largest shipper of Christmas Trees in the nation to the largest gift shop west of the Mississippi, the tour stops throughout Washington and Oregon will provide you with plenty of ideas to take back to your business. For the latest information on the 2006 NCTA Convention & Trade Show, visit

[www.realchristmastrees.org/24th.cfm](http://www.realchristmastrees.org/24th.cfm) or call (636) 449-5070.



## President's Message

For personal reasons, Dana Blais resigned in May as president of the New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association.

In such situations, the Association bylaws call for the board to appoint a new president to fill the remainder of the term.

Accordingly, at its regularly scheduled June meeting, the board appointed Mike Ahern, who will serve the year-and-a-half remaining in the term.

We wish Dana the best and thank Mike for accepting the role of president. He'll undoubtedly have a few words to say in this space in our September issue.

## 50th Anniversary Reminder

The NHVTCTA and The New England Christmas Tree Alliance (NECTA) will assemble as many as 500 tree growers, wreath makers and industry suppliers September 28-30 at the Tonry Farm, Hampton Falls, NH.

NHVTCTA members will celebrate the association's 50th anniversary. NECTA has traditionally organized a biennial winter conference but decided to join NHVTCTA and turn their 2006 biennial conference into an on-farm meeting. Attendees are expected from all New England states, eastern New York and Quebec.

The event will kick off September 28 with a traditional NECTA "rump session," an informal discussion of the New England Christmas tree and greens industry. Typical topics, with plenty of personal experience thrown in, cover tree growing, marketing pluses and minuses, and what works or doesn't work down on the farm.

State Christmas tree associations will hold short business meetings September 29 morning, followed by a keynote speaker and technical sessions presented at sites around the Tonry Farm plantation. Technical sessions on Christmas tree pests and their control will

qualify tree growers for points toward pesticide applicator licensing.

Business sessions and commercial exhibits will be held in two large tents. The evening of September 29 will feature a shore dinner - chowder, lobsters, clams, mussels and fixings - "the Downeast Way," fol-

lowed by a short program.

On September 30 technical discussions will continue along with the concurrent non-technical program.

You'll be receiving more detailed information soon. For questions, e-mail Walt Rockwood at [redrock@hughes.net](mailto:redrock@hughes.net).



## New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



### 2006 Officers

President	Mike Ahern	(603) 536-2334
Vice President	Rich Rockwood	(802) 685-4343
Recording Secretary	Carolyn Page	(603) 664-2934
Executive Secretary/Treasurer	Jim Horst	(802) 447-1900
Past President	Russell Reay	(802) 492-3323
Marketing Committee Chair	Walt Rockwood	(802) 685-2282
Group Buying Chair	Bill Nichols	(603) 353-4832

### 2006 Directors

(2006)	Mike Ahern	(603) 536-2334
(2007)	Mike Godzyk	(603) 237-5702
(2007)	Ben Hoyt	(603) 838-6403
(2006)	Rich Hourihan	(802) 563-2369
(2008)*	Phil Kivlin	(802) 897-8031
(2008)	Nigel Manley	(603) 444-6228
(2008)	Bill Nichols	(603) 353-4832
(2006)	Rich Rockwood	(802) 685-4343
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(2006)	Susan Taylor	(603) 239-4005
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(2007)	Patrick White	(802) 223-3880

### Alternate Directors

(2006)	Jay Weir (NH)	(603) 237-8617
(2006)	Larry Krygier (VT)	(802) 827-6123

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### 2006 Tree Line Publication Schedule

Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline	Mailing Date
January	--	January 18
June	June 9	June 16
September	September 15	September 22


\*Denotes second consecutive term



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## Research Report: Study looks at ways to improve marketing

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently issued this report on research conducted through a Minnesota Department of Agriculture FSMIP Grant.*

The Minnesota Christmas Tree Association (MCTA) is conducting an extensive research project to evaluate several "exotic" species of Christmas trees. They have three separate sites in Minnesota, each with a scientifically designed trial for several different varieties. The young trees were transplanted in spring of 2001. As a result of their research, Christmas tree growers will have a better understanding of which species will grow here.

Three separate but related surveys were funded as part of this grant. The final report for each is included as part of this final report. The first survey was conducted at the 2002 Minnesota State Fair and consisted of one

hundred eighty personal interviews with fairgoers in the Minnesota Christmas Tree Association display. The second survey was conducted during November and December of 2002 and included 249 completed surveys of Christmas tree customers. The surveys were distributed on site at twelve farms and lots. The third survey consisted of written surveys sent to all Minnesota Christmas Tree Association members along with all other known Christmas tree growers in the state. It was conducted during April and May, 2003 and was completed by seventy Christmas tree growers.

### Key Findings:

1. Consumers were shown a lineup of unlabeled tree varieties at the Minnesota State Fair. The lineup included both exotic species (Corkbark, Korean Fir, and Canaan Fir) in addition to

more traditional varieties such as Balsam and Fraser Fir. Consumer reaction to the exotics was strong – in most cases, the Corkbark or the Korean were chosen as the least favorite tree. However, they were also chosen as the most favorite variety by many consumers. Ironically, the same reason given for placing those varieties as least favorite (unusual color and/or texture) was also given as the reason for placing them as the most favorite. Growers may want to consider planting some of these unusual varieties (assuming that they grow well in their location) but should avoid planting too many at the expense of more traditional varieties. By having some of them, the grower will be viewed as being progressive and offering a good selection but will also be able to supply the majori-

*continued on page 8*



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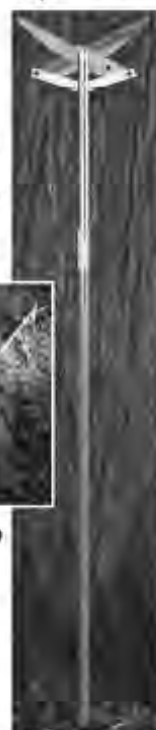
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## Research Report: The latest word in weed management trials

By John F. Ahrens

At the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station we continue to evaluate new and potentially improved methods of weed management in Christmas trees. In 2004 and 2005 we investigated the possibility of using reduced rates of SureGuard (flumioxazin) in combination with other herbicides to improve control of crabgrass and yellow nutsedge and to possibly lower costs. We also evaluated the new blends of Oust (sulfometuron methyl) and Velpar (hexazinone) for efficacy and crop safety in fraser fir.

All of our Connecticut experiments were at Kogut's Hemlock Hill Tree Farm in Enfield and Somers; two were on my farm in Vermont. The weeds at Hemlock Hill were primarily large crabgrass, common ragweed and horseweed. In a typical experiment we apply herbicides over the top of the trees in 20 to 30 gal. of spray volume per acre with a calibrated hand-held boom. Sometimes we apply the sprays with off-center nozzles hitting the lower 14 to 18 inches of the trees from each side. There are usually four to five trees per plot and treatments are replicat-

ed four times in a randomized complete block design. An experiment with 12 treatments, therefore, involves 192 to 240 trees.

### SureGuard Experiments

In 2004 and again in 2005 we compared SureGuard at rates of 4, 6, 8 and 12 ounces of product per acre with a half-rate (6 ounces) combined with Pennant Magnum (s-metolachlor), Pendulum (pendimethalin), or Surflan (oryzalin), all at standard rates, over fraser fir newly-planted into tilled soil. Pendulum and Surflan are especially effective for annual grasses and Pennant Magnum controls yellow nutsedge as well. We also included older options- Princep (simazine) at 3 lbs/A plus Pendulum 60 WDG at 5 lbs/A, and Goal 2XL at 2 qts/A plus Pendulum at 5 lbs/A or Surflan at 3 qts/A. The 2004 trial failed because it was weeded in error but the 2005 trial went according to plan.

SureGuard, even at 4 oz/A, controlled common ragweed all season but 12 oz/A was needed to control large crabgrass effectively in September. SureGuard at 6 oz/A plus Pennant Magnum at 1 1/3 qts/A gave excellent control of both ragweed and crabgrass through September. The SureGuard combinations with Pendulum or Surflan and Princep plus Pendulum were about as effective on crabgrass as SureGuard alone at 12 oz/A. However, Princep plus Pendulum and Goal plus Pendulum or Surflan were not as effective as SureGuard in controlling late-season ragweed. None of the treatments injured newly-planted fraser firs. This experiment shows that we may be able to use reduced rates of SureGuard: with Pennant Magnum, Pendulum or Surflan without sacrificing efficacy. Depending upon current prices, this could reduce costs; and combining SureGuard with Pennant Magnum would also control yellow nutsedge.



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**Other Comments:**

Experience with our conventional spring-applied herbicides in established trees tells us that they work best following Roundup (Original) alone or Roundup plus Princep in the fall. In the spring, Princep and Goal control many seedling winter annuals and Roundup controls most. SureGuard alone fails when emerged horseweed and certain other weeds are present in April. Therefore, adding Roundup at 1 pt to 1 qt/A is a viable option in the spring, but it is best not to exceed a total of 2 qts/A of Roundup Original between fall and spring.

Another caution here is that adding Roundup to Pennant Magnum or Goal (or any other emulsifiable concentrate), at labeled rates, can injure even fully-dormant conifer foliage that is contacted by their sprays.

Sulfometuron/hexazinone Experiments: Westar 75 DF, by the DuPont Co. is a blend of two herbicides: 6.5% sulfometuron methyl (Oust) and 68.6% hexazinone (Velpar) in a 1:10 ratio. Westar was registered for Eastern plantations in 2005 but was only available for trial use

We sprayed Westar and other ratios (1:15 and 1:20) of the sulfometuron/hexazinone blend over established fraser fir and a balsam/fraser cross and over newly-planted fraser fir. Bill Kogut of Hemlock Hill Tree Farm also conducted larger scale trials in 2005. The results in established firs were excellent. Applied in April, before bud break of firs, the combinations controlled seedling horseweed and hoary alyssum, and gave full-season control of large crabgrass and common ragweed with minor or no fir injury at normal rates (Westar at 8 to 12 oz/A). Late season (August-September) control was much better with Westar than with sulfometuron alone and was as good as or better than with SureGuard at 12 oz/A. However, in one experiment in fraser fir in Vermont, May applications of Westar controlled


buckhorn plantain and sweet vernalgrass but were much less effective in controlling the perennial smooth bedstraw than SureGuard at 12 oz/A plus Roundup Original at 1 1/3 qt/A..

In newly-planted fraser fir, however, Westar at 12 oz/A caused slight to moderate tree injury. Newly-planted conifers are often more sensitive to herbicides than established trees. Therefore, until we investigate further, I am reserving judgment

about the safety of Westar on newly-planted firs.




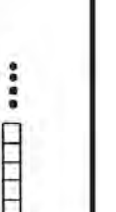
Fall applications of sulfometuron/hexazinone combinations controlled horseweed and hoary alyssum, but their longevity for annual grass control in the spring was poor. We are continuing to investigate fall vs. spring applications. We also intend to determine whether it is safe on firs to combine Roundup with





*continued from page 10*









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## Research Report: Study looks at ways to improve marketing

*continued from page 4*

ty of customers who prefer traditional varieties.

2. Tradition and fragrance continue to be the primary reasons given for purchasing a real tree, while the convenience of artificial trees and the perceived mess associated with real trees are given as the main reasons for not buying a real tree.

3. There seems to be an increasing number of households that have no Christmas during the holidays (10% in our survey). At the same time, there appears to be an increasing number of households with more than one tree (11% in our survey).

4. While 51% of real tree customers surveyed on choose and cut farms stated that they had been buying real trees for over 16 years, over 30% stated that they were buying at this particular farm for the first time. This would indicate that many customers move from farm to farm rather than always going to the same place. For marketers, it also means that they must have good on-farm signage and staff

willing to help first time customers.

5. Consumers at choose and cut farms nearly always are accompanied by other family members or friends. Only 4% indicated that they came by themselves. This reinforces the notion that marketing to families, providing family activities, and providing accommodations such as clean, accessible restrooms is critically important.

6. Balsam Fir and Fraser Fir remain the most popular trees, both in terms of what consumers purchased and what they listed as their favorite tree. Scotch Pine was a distant third in both areas.

7. Consumers are willing to travel farther to visit a choose-and-cut farm than a retail lot. Over 20% of respondents indicated that they traveled more than 20 miles to get to the farm.

8. On a scale from 1-5 with 5 being the most satisfied, the average satisfaction with the

*“Tradition and fragrance continue to be the primary reasons given for purchasing a real tree.”*

price paid was 4.0. This would seem to indicate that consumers perceive that they are receiving at least fair value and that if anything, growers may wish to explore raising prices to maximize revenue.

9. Of the total number of trees currently being grown in Minnesota, 7.3% are exotic species. Canaan Fir is the most common exotic species being grown with Meyer Spruce a distant second. Other varieties in the ground include Korean, Concolor, Nikko, Bracted Balsam and Corkbark.

10. Of the traditional varieties grown in Minnesota, Balsam ranks first in terms of tree numbers. Scotch Pine is the second most common variety but most of those trees are at least 6 years old. Of trees 0-5 years old, Fraser Fir is the second most common tree in the ground and White Pine is the 3rd most common tree. Scotch Pine is fourth.

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Fall 2006/Spring 2007	Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source	2-2	\$0.65		
Fall 2006/Spring 2007	Fraser Fir: Vermont Seed Source	2-0	\$0.20		
Fall 2006/Spring 2007	Fraser Fir: North Carolina Seed Source	2-0	\$0.20		
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Fall 2006/Spring 2007	Balsam-Fraser Hybrids: Vermont Seed Source	2-2	\$0.65		
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## Research Report: Weed management trials

*continued from page 7*

Westar in the spring to better control certain perennial weeds such as bedstraw, a serious weed in many New England plantations.

In other states Westar applied in the spring has controlled certain perennial weeds such as quackgrass, dandelion, Canada thistle, and yellow

nutsedge, and good crop safety has been reported in tests in Douglas-fir, white pine and Scotch pine. However, Dr Larry

Kuhns in Pennsylvania reports that Colorado spruce were chlorotic and stunted by Westar. The chlorosis was temporary but the stunting persisted. This agrees with our own find-

ings with the sulfometuron (Oust) component on Colorado spruce over a decade ago.

On Feb. 2, 2006, we learned from a Dupont Co. representative that Westar will not be registered or sold in the Eastern US this year. We will provide further information as we learn more about its availability in the future. Growers who are interested in a new option for weed management should consider trial use of Westar in 2006. "Trial use" means comparing any new product with your standard herbicide program at the manufacturers' suggested rates and timing; in this case-before bud break in the spring. Those who spot-treat around their trees and do not calibrate for constant speed and nozzle output are advised to bypass Westar and utilize other weed management options. I frankly think that this herbicide blend is too risky to conifers to apply in non-calibrated spot sprays. Both Oust and Velpar are absorbed by roots and can stunt or kill conifers when over-applied.

*This article appeared in the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers' Association magazine, The Real Tree Line, Feb. 2006.*

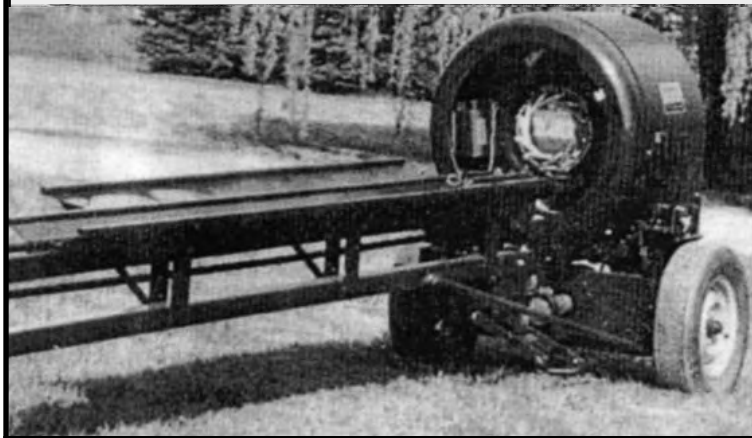
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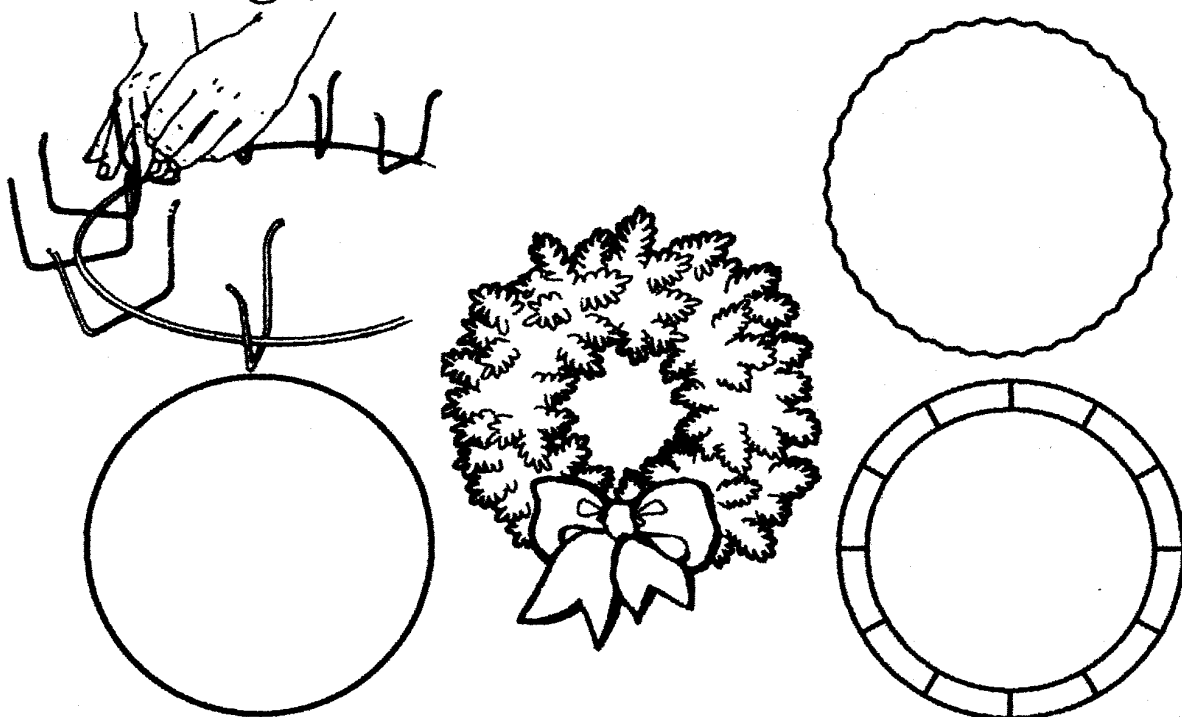
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## Editor's Desk

A number of newsworthy items have crossed my desk since the last issue of *Tree Line*.

### Group Insurance Discount Plan

The NHVTCTA recently negotiated a group insurance benefit package for its members with the Co-operative Insurance Companies, based in Middlebury, Vt.

Co-operative Insurance has agents in both Vermont and New Hampshire. Inserted into this issue of *Tree Line* you'll find a sheet containing a map and list of participating agents to help you find one near you.

NHVTCTA members are eligible for ranging from 4% to 10% discount on their farm insurance policies, as well as on home, mini-farm and auto insurance policies.

Anyone who already has a policy with the Co-op and who qualifies will be eligible for the discount at the time of policy renewal.

Representatives of Co-operative Insurance Companies will be on-hand at the June meeting in Springfield to provide additional details and answer any questions.

In the meantime, the Web site for Co-operative Insurance is [www.co-opinsurance.com](http://www.co-opinsurance.com).

The best of class for a tree other than a fir went to Carl Szych of Newport for a gorgeous blue spruce. Alan Johnson and Redrock Farm tied for second in overall points in the fir category.

### Fair Information

Rich Rockwood was in touch to say there was a typo in the information he sent out requesting help with working at fairs this summer. Rich's correct phone number is (802) 685-4343. So give him a call and sign up.

### Farm Show Winners

Results of the Farm Show tree and wreath judging were not announced at the January meeting in Barre, but I hear that Mike Godzyk took home honors for "Best of Fir Class" and "Best of Show" with a beautiful fraser fir. Best of Show wreath came from The Rocks.

### "Trading Post"

FOR SALE — Tree Shaker. #250 PTO with tree holder. Good condition. \$1,000. (Reason for selling: we have 2.) Will deliver to the June meeting in Springfield, Vt. Call Elysian Hills Tree Farm at (802) 257-0233.



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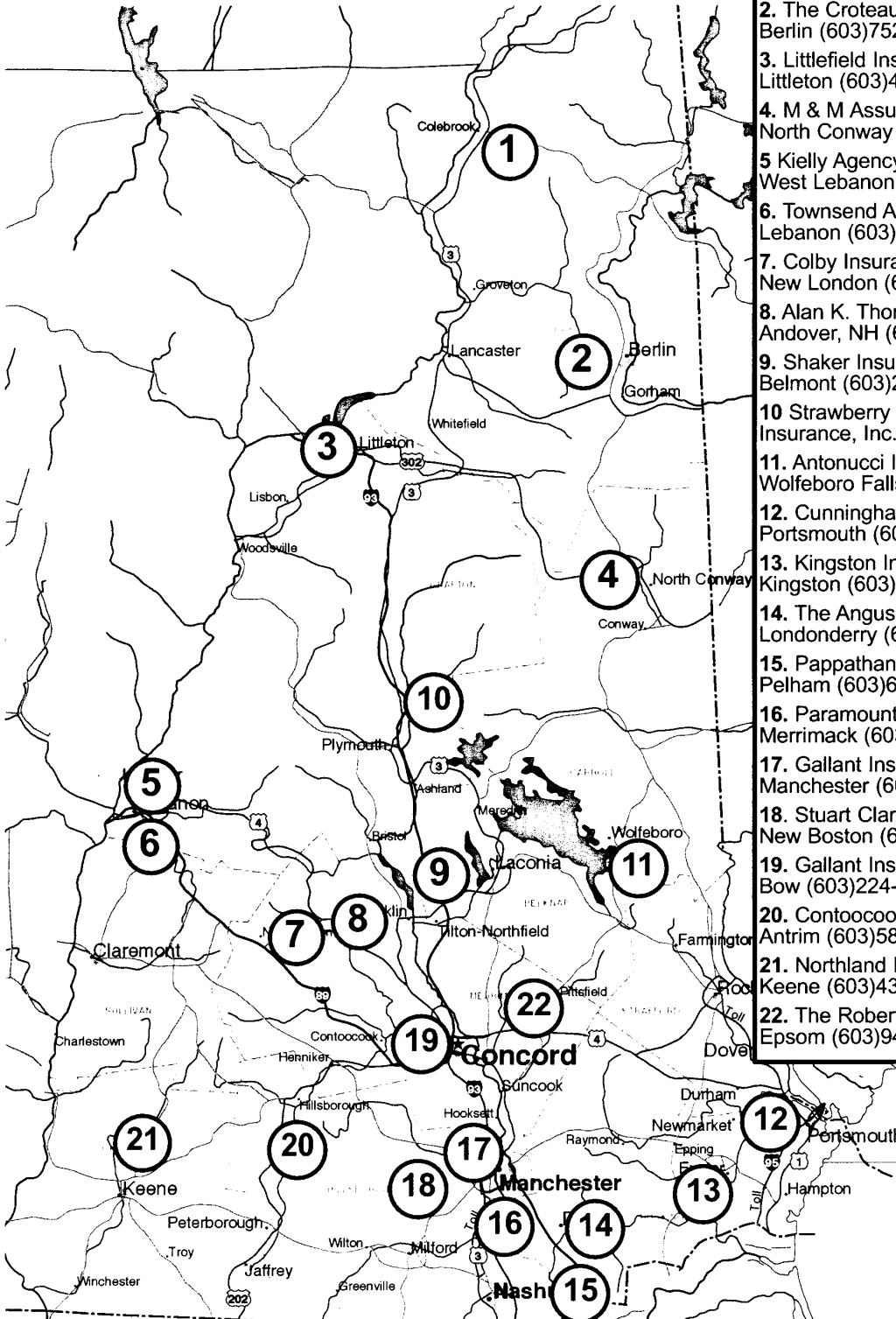
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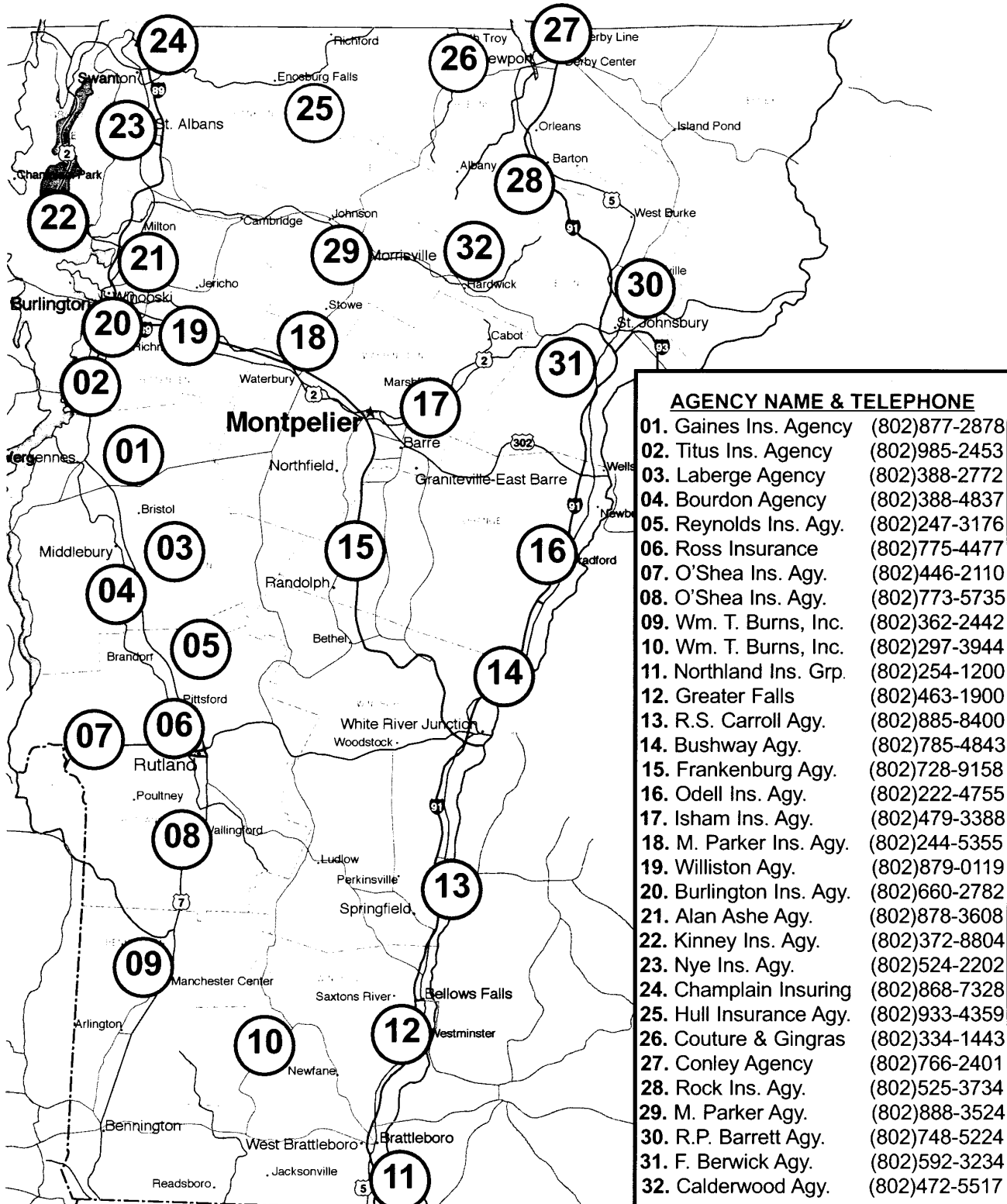
## AGENCY NAME & TELEPHONE

1. Collins Insurance Agency  
Colebrook (603)237-4788
2. The Croteau Agency, Inc.  
Berlin (603)752-2304
3. Littlefield Insurance  
Littleton (603)444-5100
4. M & M Assurance Group  
North Conway (603)356-3392
5. Kielly Agency  
West Lebanon (603)298-9898
6. Townsend Agency, Inc.  
Lebanon (603)448-2044
7. Colby Insurance Agy. Inc.  
New London (603)526-2451
8. Alan K. Thompson Insurance Agy.  
Andover, NH (603)735-5339
9. Shaker Insurance Agency  
Belmont (603)267-6585
10. Strawberry Lane Real Estate &  
Insurance, Inc. Campton (603)726-8791
11. Antonucci Insurance Services, Inc.  
Wolfeboro Falls (603)569-8933
12. Cunningham Assoc. Insurance LLC  
Portsmouth (603)334-3343
13. Kingston Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Kingston (603)642-4800
14. The Angus Group Ins. Agency, LLC  
Londonderry (603)421-0021
15. Pappathan Insurance  
Pelham (603)635-1099
16. Paramount Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Merrimack (603)424-2339
17. Gallant Insurance, Inc.  
Manchester (603)644-4663
18. Stuart Clark Insurance (Gallant)  
New Boston (603)487-2700
19. Gallant Insurance, Inc.  
Bow (603)224-0993
20. Contoocook Valley Insurance  
Antrim (603)588-6106
21. Northland Insurance Group  
Keene (603)439-2022
22. The Robertson Agency  
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