



Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

June 2004

Special points of interest:

- ♦ As we went to press, we received word of the death of longtime NHVTCTA member and former Executive Secretary Pam Dwyer. Pam passed away June 5 after a difficult battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). She served with distinction as Executive Secretary for many years until her retirement in 1999. We extend our condolences to her husband Jack and her family.
- ♦ The fall meeting is scheduled for September 25 at a location in Vermont still to be determined.
- ♦ The 13-page *New England Guide to Chemical Weed and Brush Control in Christmas Trees* has been updated for 2004. The guide is available from your extension forester and at www.ceinfo.unh.edu/Pubs/PubsFW.htm.

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June Meeting at Mountain Star

The NHVTCTA June meeting will be held Saturday, June 26, at Mountain Star Farms in Swiftwater, N.H. (On the Web at www.mtnstarfarms.com.)

Mike Garvan founded the farm in 1982. "Throughout its history, the farm has included two pieces of owned land and various other leased parcels," explains Garvan. Currently, the farm owns or leases about 100 acres, 80 of which are planted at this time.

"There are around 80,000 trees in the ground," says Garvan. "The mix is about 60 percent Fraser fir, 20 percent balsam and 20 percent canaan." The balsam are currently being phased out (replaced with canaan) because of what Garvan terms a "ferocious example of balsam gall midge."

Mountain Star sells about 9,500 trees each year, mainly wholesale but also to the choose-

and-cut and mail order markets.

Ben Hoyt (the Association's alternate director for N.H.) is Garvan's partner in the business. He started on the planting crew when he was 13 years old and now, more than 20 years later, has entered into an agreement with Garvan to purchase the farm in the future.

The meeting will allow members to see first-hand how Mountain Star Farms was able to, over a number of years, change the spacing and layout of its fields. "The spacing between rows was 5 feet," says Garvan. "We had to do too much by hand. It was expensive, back-breaking and not practical." Without simply clearing the field to start over (Garvan didn't want to lose his choose-and-cut customers by shutting down for a few years), Mountain

continued on page 11

Getting Real About Artificial Trees

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) has announced a new campaign to increase sales of real trees. Nigel Manley, of Rocks Tree Farm in Bethlehem, N.H., and our association's NCTA director, reports that growers responded enthusiastically to the plan at the NCTA CT PLUS winter conference.

"Our industry continues to lose market share to artificial trees and the national organization decided it was time to take aggressive action to reverse this trend," said Charles Grogan, NCTA President. "And, industry leaders stepped forward to invest funds at 12 cents per tree sold last year."

To implement the new expansion programs, NCTA conducted a nationwide search for a marketing communications agency and selected Smith & Harroff, Inc., an Alexandria, Va. "The strategy behind our campaign is to build on the emotional connection people have with Christmas and promote Real Trees as an integral part of that nostalgic experience," said Jay Smith, President of Smith & Harroff. "Nothing Says Christmas More Than a Real Tree' is our campaign theme. Key audiences have been identified and will be targeted with a range of communications tactics."

continued on page 6

President's Message

As I write this column on May 22, it appears that this will be a frost damage-free spring. We must rejoice when we can. Since the last issue of *Tree Line* in January, Milan Miller and I testified before the Vermont House Agriculture Committee regarding amendments to the Right-To-Farm bill. At that time, no bill had been submitted and they were just gathering input.

I have been to two meetings of NECTA, the New England Christmas Tree Alliance. This organization has only five "members": the five separate New England Christmas tree associations. NH-VT is represented by Marshall Patmos, Abby Tonry, and myself. NECTA's principal functions are to manage the Big E Christmas tree contest and display, to produce the biennial Christmas tree conference in the winter, and to provide a venue for sharing association plans and

problems in order to promote sharing and reduce conflicts. There is some concern that the biennial indoor winter conference needs some diversity, such as an opportunity to get into the field.

Discussions on this subject have lead to the decision to forego the 2005 conference. Instead, all New England and other northeast growers will join NH-VT at our two-day 50th anniversary celebration in September, 2006. The grand event will be hosted by Abby Tonry at her farm in Hampton Falls near the New Hampshire seacoast. Walt Rockwood has been promoted from Interested Investigator to General Chair of the conference.

To compensate for the 2005 conference suspension, the five New England associations will make extra efforts to publicize their meetings to all New England growers (see page 9),

and declared that member registration fees will be reciprocal.

A Big E concern which has long simmered under the surface, and occasionally come to a boil, is the practice or prohibition of volunteers promoting their own trees when on duty. At the last NECTA meeting, Abby Tonry, volunteer coordinator, stated her view that volunteers' primary message must always be to promote real trees, but there is nothing improper about someone having a good supply of business cards, and trying to sell their own trees. There was wide agreement that this practice should stand.

I look forward to a great turn-out at our meeting on June 26 at Mike Garvan and Ben Hoyt's farm in Swiftwater, just outside Woodsville, N.H.

Russell Reay, president



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



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President	Russell Reay	(802) 492-3323
Vice President	Dana Blais	(603) 747-2263
Recording Secretary	Carolyn Page	(603) 664-2924
Executive Secretary/Treasurer	Jim Horst	(802) 447-1900
Past President	Nigel Manley	(603) 444-6228
Marketing Committee Chair	Walt Rockwood	(802) 685-2282

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(2006)
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(2005)
(2004)
(2004)
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(2005)

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Mike Dannehy	(603) 747-2457
Mike Godzyk	(603) 237-5702
Rich Hourihan	(802) 563-2369
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Tom Lang	(802) 223-7028
Milan Miller	(802) 443-5382
Bill Nichols	(603) 353-4832
Rich Rockwood	(802) 685-4343
Susan Taylor	(603) 239-4005
Bob White	(802) 899-4924

Alternate Directors

(2004)	Ben Hoyt	(603) 838-6403
(2004)	Larry Krygier	(802) 827-6123

*Denotes second consecutive term

Contact Information

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2004 Tree Line Publication Schedule

Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline	Mailing Date
January	---	January 9
June	May 28	June 4
September	August 27	September 3

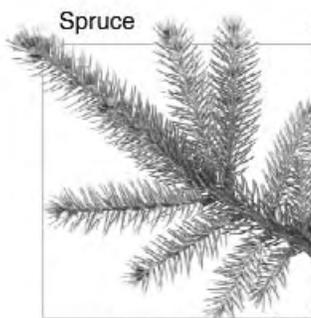
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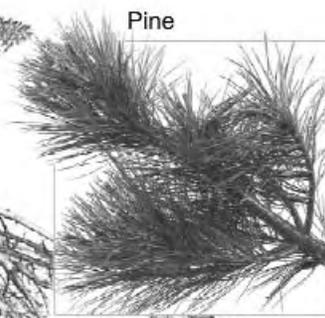
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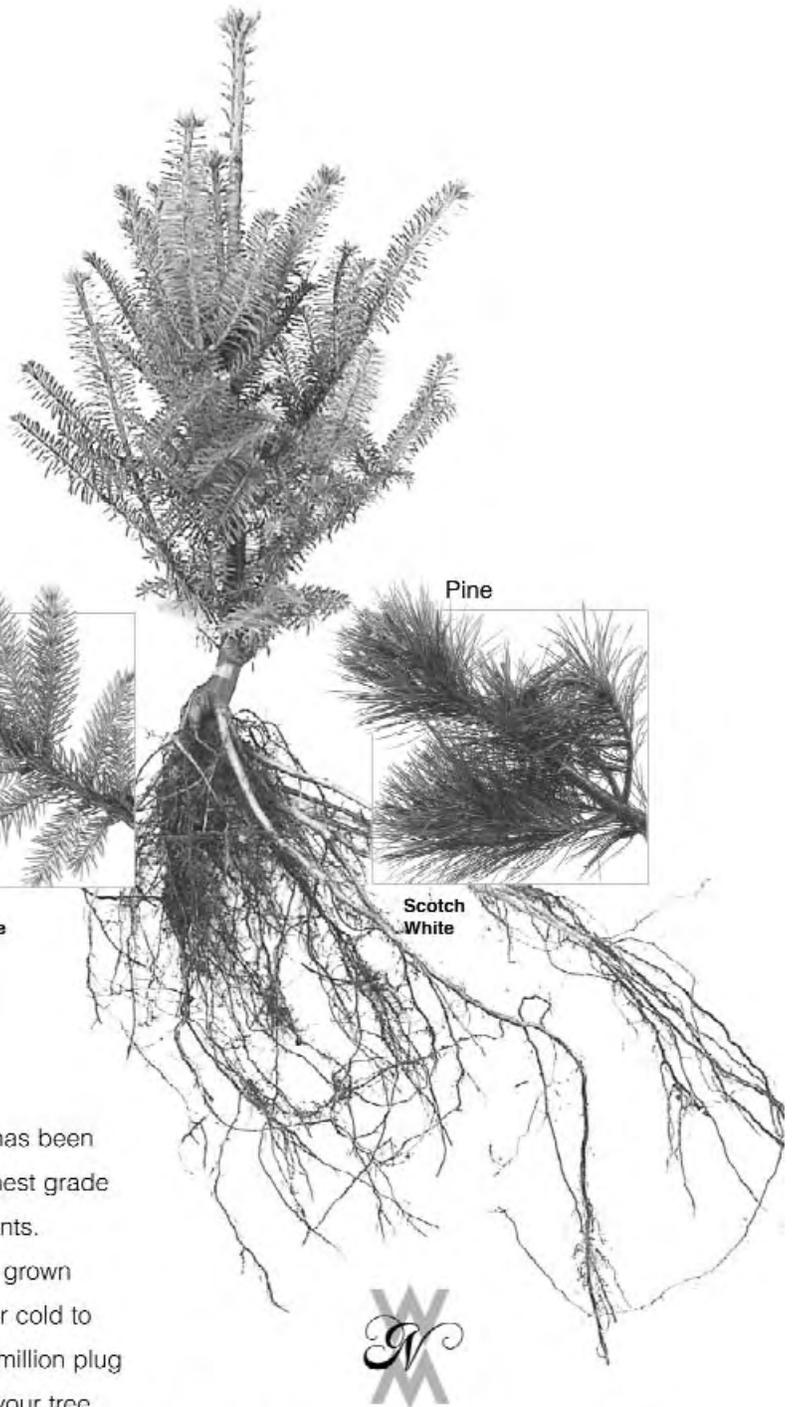


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SINCE 1923

On Working Toward Weed-Free Christmas Tree Plantations in 2004

By John Ahrens

It is impractical, if not impossible, to have a Christmas tree plantation without some weeds, given that hundreds of wild plants are potential weeds and that surface soils can contain hundreds of weed seeds in every square foot. Weeds growing in aisles between rows may actually be beneficial—for soil conservation, support of insect predators and reducing compaction by equipment—but weeds growing close to our trees (within 12 to 18 inches) are detrimental to tree growth, quality and profitability. Using weed management tools in effective ways is a continuing challenge for Christmas tree growers. Keeping abreast of the new tools and research findings is essential if we want to improve our weed management skills.

SureGuard herbicide

Our newest weed management tool is the herbicide flumioxazin which will be available under the trade names SureGuard and BroadStar. Dr. Todd Mervosh and I have been evaluating flumioxazin over the past four seasons for potential uses in ornamental nurseries and Christmas trees. We conducted Christmas tree experiments at Hemlock Hill Tree Farm (Bill and Kathy Kogut), Wrights Mill Tree Farm (Al and Amanda Amundsen), Dzen Tree Farm (John Dzen, Jr.), the Valley Laboratory, and on my farm in Vermont. A seedbed experiment was conducted at the State Forest Nursery at Voluntown.

The sprayable SureGuard 51% water-dispersible granule is the most practical and economical form of flumioxazin for Christmas trees or transplant beds. BroadStar is a 0.25% granular formulation that could find uses in transplant beds. Neither formulation can be used safely in seedbeds. Valent USA Corp. has

recently received a federal registration for both products. However, state registrations will also have to be obtained and at this writing we do not know which states will have them for spring of 2004.

SureGuard is primarily a preemergence herbicide for most annual weeds but also controls some weeds after emergence—



i.e., chickweed, moss, annual bluegrass, seedling crabgrass and some seedling broadleaves such as ragweed and lambsquarters. It will be of value in controlling groundsel, lambsquarters and pigweeds that are resistant to simazine and atrazine. It has controlled Asiatic dayflower and suppressed mugwort but does not control most perennial weeds, including quackgrass and yellow nutsedge. Applied in April, SureGuard has been effective for long season control at 8 to 12 ounces (wt.) per acre. Rates 2.7 to 4 times higher have not injured firs in our tests, even when applied for 3 consecutive years. However, to avoid injury to Christmas trees, SureGuard must be applied before bud break or after new growth has hardened unless sprays are fully directed to avoid conifer foliage. Applications in spring after bud break cause severe frost-like contact injury to new growth. To control perennial weeds and grasses and established horseweed, SureGuard can be combined with Roundup Original at 1 to 2 pints per acre, before bud

break (2 pints per acre for perennials), in true firs and spruces.

What is special about SureGuard is that it has controlled annual weeds and grasses as well as, and usually better than, our standard combinations of Princep (simazine) plus Surflan, Princep plus Pendulum and Princep plus Aatrex (atrazine). It provides us a low-rate “single product” option to our previous “standards.” As with any new herbicide we still have more to learn about SureGuard. Further experiments and grower use will probably turn up new discoveries. Whenever possible, growers should consider comparing SureGuard side by side with their standard spring herbicides.

Surflan (oryzalin) vs. Pendulum (pendimethalin) vs. Pennant Magnum (s-metolachlor)

These herbicides control annual grasses before emergence, but all require help such as simazine, Goal (oxyfluorfen) and/or atrazine to control broadleaf weeds. Pennant is the one to use if yellow nutsedge is a problem in your plantation. Effective rates of Pennant Magnum range from 43 to 50 fluid ounces per acre, applied before budbreak and preferably followed soon by rainfall. Where nutsedge is not a problem, I would choose either Surflan or Pendulum, which control more broadleaf weeds.

In past years we observed better control of certain broadleaf weeds such as groundsel and pigweeds with Surflan than with Pendulum, but in 2003 we obtained longer control of crabgrass with Pendulum than with Surflan, both at 2.7 lbs. active ingredient per acre. We also found that the new slow release formulation of pendimethalin (Pendulum 3.8 AquaCap and

continued on page 8

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Research Report: Deer Damage

Excerpted from Iowa State Univ. Extension; this detailed article can be read in its entirety at www.ag.iastate.edu/departments/forestry/ext/pubs/F-358.pdf.

Several actions can be taken to reduce deer damage.

Fences

Properly constructed and maintained fencing is one of the best methods for preventing deer depredations. However, fencing is expensive, and a cost/benefit analysis should be conducted.

The "Penn State five-wire fence" is recommended for moderate deer pressure on small to moderate acreages. This fence utilizes high voltage, low impedance energizers, high tensile strength smooth steel wire (12 1/2 gauge, 200,000 psi), and special in-line tighteners that maintain tension.

A slanted seven wire fence works well for moderate to high deer pressure on moderate to large areas. This fence may be electrified but also reportedly works satisfactorily without electrification. The wires are spaced at one-foot intervals along a rail slanted at a 45 degree angle to the ground (away from the tree crop) to an outside height of four feet. This fence covers about six feet of horizontal space and presents a formidable barrier.

Repellents

Deer repellents are generally best suited for smaller areas; may fail to protect if other foods are scarce; and may be dissipated by rain. Repellents are classified as area (odor) or contact (taste) agents.

Taste repellents are placed directly on the plants to be protected. They are most effective on dormant trees or shrubs, but must be applied when the temperature is above freezing. Treat to a height of six feet or only the terminal growth on larger trees.

Other

Harvesting deer during the legal season is one of the best ways to control their numbers. Encourage hunting in problem areas; solicit the cooperation of your neighbors to allow hunting on adjacent property. Planting decoy crops or supplemental feeding may also be helpful.

Other good online sources of information on controlling deer damage include:

-www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/wldlf2/c728.pdf

-www.naturalresources.umd.edu/Pages/Deer_Paper.html

****If you've tried something that's worked, please contact the editor so he can pass along any tips in the next issue of Tree Line.*

NCTA, continued from page 1

Since children are a key determinant as to whether there is a Christmas Tree in the home, NCTA's new program will include a national "Help Santa Find the Perfect Real Christmas Tree" contest. This program will encourage children -- and their parents -- to show the Christmas spirit by decorating a Real Christmas Tree.

They will submit entries that include a short essay and photograph of their family next to the "perfect Real Tree." The program will include prizes such as a trip to Washington to attend the lighting of the National Christmas Tree.

To encourage sales of Real Christmas Trees, industry participants will receive an enhanced marketing tool kit that will allow users - retailers, choose and cutters, major growers and others - to expand media coverage using tested consumer messages.

Other programs elements will include a proactive Internet-marketing strategy; partnerships with other industries interested in reaching similar customers; a "rapid response program" focused on fire safety issues; and development of paid advertising.

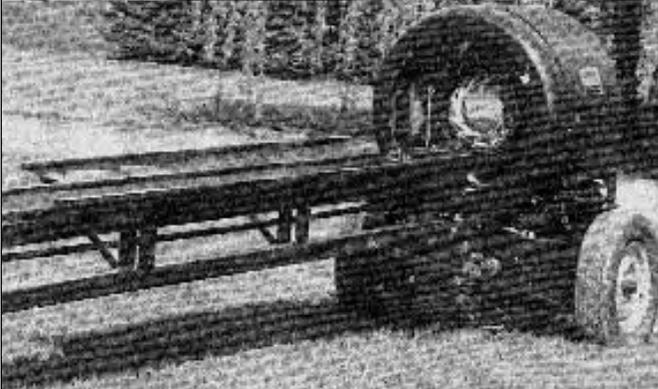
"The ultimate goal of the campaign is to encourage more and more Americans to enjoy a quality Christmas experience with their loved ones," Manley said. "Now, we're launching a major fund-raising effort. We need to know how much money will be available so we can start developing the campaign elements in time to provide to participants for the 2004 selling season."

Nigel Manley says that members who are interested in supporting this market expansion campaign may send funds to NCTA, 1000 Executive Parkway, Suite 220, St. Louis, MO 63141. The NCTA has already begun to contact growers to educate them about the initiative.

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Editor's Desk

A number of newsworthy items have crossed my desk since the last issue of *Tree Line*. Until next time, happy shearing...

The State of Vermont is on the lookout for a 25- to 30-foot specimen to serve as the **State House Christmas tree**. It would be a great source of P.R. for the Association and the industry if a Christmas tree grower stepped forward. The Dept. of Forests & Parks will cut and transport the tree, and even pays \$100. The prominent display setting in Montpelier should provide growers with added marketing incentive. Contact your county forester if you're interested.

Group Buying Update: 24,000 Canaan Fir P+1+1 were ordered through group buying from the Canaan Fir Company.

Trees were delivered via refrigerated truck from the nursery in Washington State. Time will tell, but the trees seemed of good quality and early survivability has been excellent. A similar Canaan fir group buy is planned for next year and will be discussed at the fall meeting. Contact Jim Horst if you're interested in participating.

Richard and Stephanie Rockwood, Redrock Farm, Chelsea, scored a double "Best of Show" for Christmas tree and wreath at the **2004 Vermont Farm Show**. A 7-foot Redrock Farm balsam fir was judged excellent, class winner and best of show. Stephanie's decorated balsam fir wreath was judged Excellent, Class Winner and Best of Show. A decorated wreath by Richard Hourihan, Cabot Tree

Farm, West Danville, scored excellent. A 6-foot balsam fir entered in the youth division by Dan Hourihan, Cabot Tree Farm, was also judged excellent. All members should consider entering a tree or wreath next year.

Walt Rockwood submitted the following **book review**: "Christmas tree growers who like John Grisham's novels will enjoy a book by him that makes a complete departure from his usual content. *Skipping Christmas* (Doubleday, 177 pages) is a delightful story about Luther and Nora Krank and the year they decided to skip Christmas and go on a cruise. No tree, no decorations, no parties--just work on a their tans and get ready to cruise. It's a hilarious look at what happens on Hemlock Street as the Krank's neighbors react."

Got Profit?

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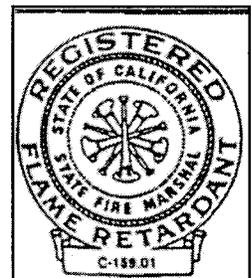


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On Working Toward Weed-Free Christmas Tree Plantations in 2004

continued from page 4

Hurdle 3.8 ACS) gave control of crabgrass equivalent to Pendulum 60 WDG. Given these findings I would choose between oryzalin and pendimethalin products on the basis of cost.

Surflan A.S. vs. Oryzalin A. S.

You may remember that Surflan A.S. by Dow Agro Sciences was not available in 2002 because of a factory explosion. In 2003 Oryzalin A.S. and PRO were introduced by FarmSaver.com with the same active ingredient (oryzalin) as Surflan. Some growers questioned whether Surflan A.S. and Oryzalin A.S. would be equally effective. In experiments at the Valley Laboratory in 2003, no injury occurred on Fraser fir with either product and weed control was about the same.

Roundup Original vs. Honcho

In the fall of 2003 the Monsanto Co. announced that Roundup Original, the preferred formulation of glyphosate for Christmas trees, would no longer

be produced and would be replaced by Honcho. I confirmed that Honcho has the same active ingredient and surfactant contents as Roundup Original and may cost less. The difference is that Honcho currently does not list Christmas tree uses on the label. So, we could have a regulatory problem in some states. I also learned, however, that there still is a large amount of Roundup Original in the supply line, even though some suppliers could not deliver it in the fall of 2003. And, of course, we still have the option of using Roundup Original equivalent products, Glyphosate 4 by FarmSaver.com or Glyphos by Cheminova. However, Glyphosate 4 has only been available in 30 gallon drums which restricts its use only to large growers.

It appears that we again will have to compare the newer replacement formulations of glyphosate for safety in dormant Christmas trees. Our last series of glyphosate formulation experiments several years ago showed that the older Roundup Original and Glyphos products were less

injurious to Christmas trees than Roundup Ultra and PRO, which contained more and different surfactants. The current new formulations of Roundup by Monsanto will be potassium salts rather than isopropyl amine salts and no one knows whether this change will affect selectivity in conifers.

Stay tuned and don't hesitate to call if you have questions.

Acknowledgements: Our work has been supported with federal funds through the National IR-4 Program that seeks to expand pesticide registrations in small acreage crops, by Valent USA Corp., by grants from the Memorial/Research Fund of the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers' Association, and by the cooperating growers mentioned above.

John Ahrens is plant scientist emeritus, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Valley Laboratory, Windsor, 860-683-4985. Reprinted from the February 2004 issue of the Real Tree Line, a quarterly magazine of the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association.

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Border-Crossings

As explained in Russell Reay's "President's Message" on page 2, a number of state Christmas tree associations in the Northeast have decided to allow members from other states to attend meeting at the "member" rate. This reciprocal agreement is designed to promote the

sharing of information across state borders.

Peter Sweet, director of the Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association, compiled the following table of association contacts and meeting information. He explains, "I am a member of all four states and with good reason.

I see a lot of missed opportunity! From year to year excellent meetings and events are held at close proximity to a state borders and neighboring growers are totally unaware."

This information should help growers take advantage of added opportunities over-the-border.

State	Time of year	Type of meeting
Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association Secretary: Julie Gauld 978-365-5818 E-mail: bandjevergreen@aol.com	June Early Oct 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 4 twilight meetings geographically spread across state · One annual meeting late summer or early fall
Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association Executive Director: Kathy Kogut 203-237-9400 E-mail: wkogut@cox.net	March, first Saturday June July Late Sept or early Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Annual meeting, Middletown, Connecticut · Two or three twilight meetings · Windsor experimental station put on by the station scientists, 6:00 PM · Saturday farm meeting
New Hampshire/Vermont Christmas Tree Association Executive Secretary: James Horst 802-447-1900 E-mail: info@nhvtchristmastree.org	Winter Spring, 3rd or 4th Saturday of June Fall, usually last Sat. in Sept./ first Sat. in Oct.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · With VT Farm Show, usually last Wednesday in January · Saturday farm meeting · Saturday farm meeting
Christmas Tree Farmers Association of New York Executive Secretary: Bob Norris 800-484-1286 E-mail: bnorris@redcreek.net	Winter, usually 3rd Friday/Saturday of January Summer meeting, usually end July or first of August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Two-day convention at Turning Stone Casino · Two day farm meeting · 2004 summer will be with national in Pennsylvania

Trading Post

Members may advertise goods and services related to the tree and wreath industry for no charge. Nonmembers may advertise items for \$10. Submit ads/questions to the *Tree Line* editor.

For Sale: For Sale: Kubota 245DT tractor 4WD, 24 hp diesel with bucket loader, 345 hours, \$4900.00. In Woodbury, VT. Call (860) 242-6620, e-mail jpahrens@worldnet.att.net.

Wanted: The Association occasionally receives requests from individuals seeking to purchase a Christmas tree farm. If you're interested in selling your farm, send some basic information (farm size, location, related housing, etc.) to NHVTCTA Executive Director Jim Horst (e-mail mtafarms@adelphia.net) so he can pass it along to anyone who inquires.

For Sale: Wreath Supplies:
Center Piece Kits: #KKCO1-standard round-4 Candle (Pkg, 6) 3 complete kits. \$20 ea. (Reg. \$25.85 + ship.) Ribbon-15 spools #R100VV 4" #100 25 yd. \$5 per spool (Red-some burgundy) (Reg. \$8 + ship). **Boxes:** Kissing Ball Box: #BXXBS 10"x10"x10" (13) \$10 (Reg. 25-\$24.20 + ship). Inserts for above: #BXXB1 (40+) \$30 (Reg. 50-\$52.50 + ship) Tree Box: #BXT83.5 (4'5" tree) (9) \$40 (Reg. 10-\$48 + ship). Will deliver to the June meeting. Elysian Hills Tree Farm (Bill & Mary Lou); e-mail: elysianh@sover.net or call (802) 257-0233.

For Sale: Bachtold Mower, Kohler 8hp engine. It's old (1987) but not used heavily. Runs well and it's cheap! Best reasonable offer. Can deliver to Spring meeting. Jim Horst, Bennington, Vt., (802) 447-0660.



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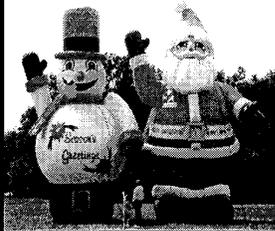


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57 Years!
1947 to 2004

Mountain Star Farms To Host June Meeting

continued from page 1

Star has been able improve the spacing and overall layout of the fields. The meeting will also provide insight on leasing land for Christmas tree production.

In the afternoon, the meeting will move to a different field down the road where Garvan and Hoyt will explain an innovate planting program they've established. Prior to planting, transplants are sorted into three dif-

ferent size classifications. Root/basal pruning is also done at this time. Garvan says, "There is additional time and cost to doing this work at the time of planting, but we're now 4 years into the program and it makes a difference down the line."

With trees of a similar size grouped together, shearing and harvesting can take place on the entire uniform group, rather than working around trees of a different size and forcing employees to

make individual decisions for individual trees.

One key Mountain Star employee will not be at the June meeting, but Garvan wants to be sure he is recognized: Jamie Houston, a member of the N.H. National Guard who was called up in January and deployed to Iraq in March.

If you have not received a meeting registration form and would like to attend, contact Jim Horst at (802) 447-1900.

New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association Summer Meeting June 26, 2004 *Mountain Star Farms, Swiftwater, NH*

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 8:30-9:30 | Registration and coffee, visit vendors |
| 9:30-10:00 | Business meeting |
| 10:00- 10:30 | Welcome to Mountain Star Farms - <i>Mike Garvan</i> |
| 10:30-11:00 | Leasing land for Christmas tree production - <i>Mike Garvan, Ben Hoyt</i> |
| 11:00-11:30 | Report of new NCTA Marketing Plan - <i>Nigel Manley, NCTA Director</i> |
| 11:30-Noon | Diagnosing and Managing Spider Mites; Update on Root Rot Investigations - <i>Barbara Burns, Insect and Disease Specialist, VT Dept of Forests and Parks</i> |
| Noon-1:00 | Lunch - <i>Beef Burgundy with Rice, Stuffed Shells, Salad</i> |
| 1:00-2:30 | Field tour |
| | Station 1 Species selection and farm layout/conversion - <i>Ben Hoyt</i> |
| | Station 2 Marketing-Choose and cut/wholesale/brush - <i>Mike Garvan</i> |
| | Station 3 Diagnosing and Managing Fir Insects - <i>Barbara Burns</i> |
| 2:30-4:30 | Move to the Locke Place, a 15-minute drive |
| | · New field layout |
| | · Sorting planting stock by size to increase production |

Pesticide recertification credits have been applied for. 3.0 CFE credits for SAF and NH forester licensing.

All participants will receive a CD-ROM with a sample land lease, fertilizer/pesticide spread sheets including calibration information, shearing crew guidelines, and other farm information. Who can say that we are not great at sharing knowledge and information!

DIRECTIONS TO MOUNTAIN STAR FARMS

From I-91 in VT, get off at exit 17 (Wells River). Take Route 302 into Wells River, cross the Connecticut River into Woodsville, NH, and continue on Route 302 east. About three miles out of town, turn right onto Route 112. Mountain Star Farms is three miles up the road on the right.

From I-93 in NH, get off at exit 32 in Woodstock and Lincoln. Take Route 112 to North Woodstock, and continue on Route 112 west through the White Mountain National Forest. Mountain Star Farms is on the left, exactly 18 miles from the light in North Woodstock. From far northern NH, take Route 302 south out of Littleton. Go through Lisbon and Bath, turn left onto Route 112.

Walker's Barn Destroyed by Fire

Anyone who attended the NHVTCTA Fall meeting at Ian Walker's farm in Madbury, N.H., a few years ago no doubt remembers the majestic 1850s post-and-beam barn and unique 1840s cobbler's shop structure that served as the Christmas tree customer warming building.

Those buildings, along with two others, were destroyed by fire on April 8. In addition, the Walker's home was damaged in the blaze. Making matters worse, the subsequent investigation determined the fire was no act of nature. The blaze was started by a Massachusetts resident passing through the area along the nearby railroad tracks.

"He crawled into the barn and set a fire to stay warm," explains Walker. When he awoke and saw the fire out of control, he didn't even have the decency to knock on our door to alert us." Fortunately, Walker and his wife eventually awoke and escaped, as



The Walker's barn, as seen at the 2002 Fall meeting, was destroyed by fire in early April. Three other buildings and 300 trees were also lost.

the fire eventually spread in a strong wind to the back of their house.

Police pieced the series of events together after the man

made it over the border to Massachusetts and sought treatment at a hospital for his burns.

Not only were four structures, 300 trees and a woodworking studio full of lumber destroyed, Walker lost all of his Christmas tree equipment in the blaze. He was able to purchase a new tractor, sprayer and fertilizer this spring. "We're going to go on," he says. "We're piecing it together. With the help of some very good friends, we were able to plant 2,000 trees this spring."

Walker says he will erect a new barn, and is searching for a replacement cobbler's building to serve as his Christmas tree shop. "Losing that building hurt as much as the barn loss," he admits.

Walker advises other growers to spread their equipment out, storing it in different buildings at different locations, to avoid losing it all in a fire or other catastrophic event.



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