



Tree Line



New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association

September 2017

Special points of interest:

◆ Trading Post

WANTED: The NHVTCTA recently was contacted by a couple interested in purchasing a Christmas tree farm in New England. They are looking for a property that is 50-200 acres, with 25+ acres in Christmas trees. They'd like the farm to include a house for their family, barn, and space for a potential pasture and riding trails. If you know of a farm that's for sale, contact Farrah Dobbins at farrah@adanceplace.com or 970-420-8978.

◆ Upcoming Meetings

The Winter 2018 meeting will be held in conjunction with the Vermont Farm Show on Tuesday, Jan. 30. The Summer 2018 meeting will be at the NH State Nursery in Boscawen on Saturday, June 23.

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Fall Meeting: Windswept Mountains View

The Fall Meeting of the NHVTCTA will be held on Saturday, Sept. 23, at Windswept Mountains View Christmas Tree Farm in Richmond, N.H. Our hosts for the day, Sue and Jeff Taylor, will show us what is possible on a rocky hill farm with a lot of hard work and determination. The soils are good and Christmas trees of many varieties (17, in fact) do well here, but rocks and the topography require almost all work to be done by hand.

Jeff planted the first 1,000 balsam trees in 1984, with no intention of becoming a commercial grower. Now he has over 15 acres in active cultivation. The Taylors sell all of their trees choose-and-cut and have a loyal customer base that comes back year after year. A beautiful new post and beam sales barn displays wreaths and other decoration items that add extra income.

The day will begin with a morning association business meeting that includes the election of directors and approval of the 2018 budget. We will also have an open session in the morning to allow members to share ideas and experiences about growing, marketing, etc.

David Rousseau with the NH Division of Pest Control will be on hand to offer a presentation on "Pesticide Worker Protection Standards."

After lunch, there will be two concurrent afternoon sessions: a walking tour of the farm led by Jeff and son Billy Packard, and a presentation on wreath-making with exotic greens, as well as tips for running a gift barn, by Sue.

Registration for the meeting (without a guaranteed meal) is available onsite if you have not already sent in your registration form. Contact Jim Horst for more information.

National Activities

Nigel Manley, NHVTCTA representative to the National Christmas Tree Association, as well as a member of the National Christmas Tree Promotion Board's promotion committee, offers this update on the activities of these organizations, as well as a Trees for Troops update:

The National Meeting was held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers meeting this year. It was a well-run event with two farm tours and seminars for those that attended. I could not attend the meeting programs apart

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President's Message

Hi all,

Our voices have been heard! The Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule that was passed in 2015 giving the EPA broad control over water and wetlands in the US has been stopped, at least temporarily. As written, the new definition for WOTUS gave the EPA control over lands where water may collect even if they are not wet most of the time, like puddles. Thirteen states sued the federal government requesting it "Ditch The Rule" and on February 28, 2017, President Trump signed an Executive Order to rescind or revise the rule, reverting it back to pre 2015 regulations. Nothing is final in government but a common sense approach is necessary for long-term success.

The upcoming meeting at Jeff and Sue Taylor's farm sounds interesting. Growing 17 varieties of trees on one farm shows serious commitment to Christmas tree propagation and a willingness to experiment a little. I'm sure we will all learn something of interest that we

can apply to our own operations.

Lastly, bring a tree for the contest. I really enjoy seeing what other farms are doing with their particular soils and varieties of trees. Knowledge is power! See you all there.

*Daniel Beloin,
President*

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New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association



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Copies of the Association bylaws and policies are available to members at any time by contacting the Executive Secretary.

2018 Tree Line Publication Schedule	
Issue	Ad/Submission Deadline
January	Jan. 5
June	June 1
September	Sept. 7

NHVTCTA News Roundup

All's Fair

It's fair season once again and special thanks are owed to the NHVTCTA members who devote many hours to ensuring there are real Christmas trees on display for people to see and appreciate. At the top of this list is

- Peter Lyon**, who once again picked up trees and put together a great display at the Champlain Valley Fair. He sent along these results of the judging:
- Best of Show, **Alan Johnson**, Balsam (Note: Alan has now won best of show three years in a row, believe it is a record!)
- Judges Choice & Best of Class, **Claude Fontaine**, Fraser
- Best of Class, **Bob White**, Canaan
- Best of Class, **Bill Tester**, Balsam/ Fraser
- Special Mention: **Tom Paine**, Fraser;

Bryan Blundell, Blundell Hybrid; Alan Johnson, Fraser; Bob White, Fraser; **Bill Asack & Son**, Fraser Hybrid; **Peter Purinton**, Balsam.

Also, a beautiful wreath was submitted by **R J Willey** that won a Blue Ribbon.

Russell Reay coordinated a display and competition at the Rutland County Fair, where **Ben Nichols** won Best of Show.

The Tunbridge Fair had yet to take place at press time, but **Rich Rockwood** is once again heading up the tree display there and results will be in the next issue.

And **Dan Beloin** has again put together an informational booth on real Christmas trees for The Big E—a huge undertaking. Look for details of this in the next issue, as well.

Bring A Tree to the Fall Meeting

Speaking of tree competitions, please remember to bring a tree to the upcoming Fall meeting for the annual **NHVTCTA Tree Competition**. This is a contest for members, and judged by members. As Dan Beloin notes in his President's column, it's fun and educational to see what other growers are doing!

Meeting Help Needed

If you'd be interested in helping plan NHVTCTA meetings, please email Patrick White pwhitevt@aol.com. We're looking for someone to help pick topics, find speakers, coordinate with host farms, etc. You'd have plenty of help, but we need someone to help lead the effort.



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Balsam Fir: Cooks Strain Vermont Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	SOLD OUT
Balsam-Fraser Hybrids: Vermont Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	\$1.05
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Rogers Mtn.) Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	SOLD OUT
Fraser Fir: N.C. (Ayers) Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	SOLD OUT
Mystery Tree: Late-Breaking Fraser Fir	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	\$1.20
Canaan Fir: West Virginia Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	\$1.15
VEICHII X Balsam Hybrids: Asack&Son Seed Source	Fall 2017 / Spring 2018	2-2	\$1.25 / 100 MAX.

Tool Time: Battery-Powered Chainsaws

There is a definite trend in outdoor power equipment toward battery power. A few members who are using electric chainsaws on their farms and sales lots share their experiences here.

Tom Lang
Balsam Acres

Electric chainsaws? No self-respecting, born and bred Vermonter would be caught dead using one, or would they? Historically Vermonters would not use electric chainsaws and kind of “looked down their noses” at anyone who did. Those that did were either “flatlanders” or Vermonters from the more urban and suburban areas of the state. I recall hearing the story of an attorney who moved to Calais, Vt., and quickly bought a chainsaw to use in the woods on his property. He was so proud of himself and his saw he was telling all who would listen about his purchase at the local store. That is until one of the old time locals said to him – “how far do you think that cord will reach into the woods”? Well those corded chainsaws days are over.

The new electric chainsaws



are battery-operated and really work well in the Christmas tree industry. This is especially true for the choose and cut operations and for basal pruning wholesale trees as they are cut for market.

Most of us have experienced mild to severe difficulty in starting, at least initially, gas powered chainsaws in cold weather. In a choose and cut operation this can happen a few times a day if business is a little slow during the week. Here at Balsam Acres some three seasons ago, after being ashamed of ourselves for “doing some cussin,” we purchased a 40-volt battery operated Greenworks saw. The first season we used it we cut some 60 trees and didn’t need to sharpen it even once. This has now been the case for three seasons. A

year later, in conjunction with other growers, we purchased a 40-volt Oregon saw. This saw has received the same praise as the Greenworks. It is such a relief to push off the safety, pull the trigger and have the saw start immediately every time. The Oregon is a bit heavier than the Greenworks and cuts a little faster. The Greenworks will cut an average Christmas tree in less than 30 seconds so this may not be an issue or concern. The Oregon needs charging once a week whereas the Greenworks makes it through our whole season on one charge. The Oregon is also self-sharpening, which is quite handy in the middle of a busy day. Both saws appear to stop a bit quicker than gas saws when the trigger is released.

On a real cold day it is important to keep the saws warm when not in use as the chains will freeze up. All said and done we would purchase either saw again. If you want a lighter saw that takes little sharpening buy the Greenworks. If you want more speed and self-sharpening buy the Oregon. We checked several battery-operated chainsaws before purchasing and found these two to be the most highly recommended consistent with economical purchasing. Give them a try! You’ll likely be pleasantly surprised by the utility they provide with little hassle.

It is also a way to contribute positively to our environment in terms of reduction of air and sound pollution.

No more gas powered chainsaws for this choose and cut operation during sales season. We’ve been spoiled.

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Tool Time: Battery-Powered Chainsaws



Paul Lemire
Noel's Tree Farm

At our tree farm we only use Oregon 40-volt cordless chain saws. We have been using them for three years. We currently have four saws, three with 12-inch bars, and one with a 16-inch bar. I bought extra batteries so that each saw has two batteries.

These saws are not made for cutting cordwood, but putting a fresh cut on Christmas they work very well. We always carry spare chains, and oil for the

bars, a little oil goes a long way. If the employees keep the bars out of the dirt, the chains only get sharpened every other day. They are quiet, and you don't have to have any gas hanging around. These saws have been very useful at our farm. If you go online you can find some great prices.

Bob White
Whites Tree Farm

Thanks to Paul Lemire's efforts a couple seasons ago we purchased an Oregon battery saw for cleaning up the bases of trees after netting them. It really improved our customers experience and helped some of our employees drastically.

Before this we ran several

types of smaller, not real loud gas saws. Some employees could not start the saws due to their worn out arms, some were afraid of them and would not run them. For to many of the families with younger children, the gas saws created a very unpleasant situation for them—tears and scared little kids is not a good time for most families. Kids did not understand the sound or what was being done to their tree. Many adults did not appreciate being around a loud saw either.

For last season we decided to purchase a second battery saw. The Oregon we have is 40 volts with an automatic sharpener and works well, however

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Tool Time: Battery-Powered Chainsaws

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the batteries ran down faster than we would have liked, and the chain sharpener filled up with grass etc. After reviewing what was available on the web it looked like EGO was rated as a good option. Home Depot sells them with a 30-day return policy so decided to try one, risk free. We purchased a 14-inch saw with a 56V 2.0 AH battery. Rapidly we found it was the wrong saw for our needs and returned it. We picked up a 16-inch saw with a 56V 5 AH battery, which was a newer design and spins faster—what a difference, that was a machine, it is well designed and meets all our needs. It has a standard chain and runs hard all day on one battery at our place (at least during the



first season), and costs about \$300. All employees run it without the past issues. No scared kids any more, life is good.

Recommendations: there are several types of battery saws available, EGO may or may not be the best, it is priced right, designed and built very well. The EGO works very well for us and we are buying more of them. Gas saws will not be run around the public again at our farm. We strongly recommend using battery saws around the public, it just makes a much better experi-

ence for all. Get the highest voltage and Amp Hour battery you can afford with the fastest spinning saw motor.

The battery saws do have one issue and that is chain oil; we always run them out because they do not run out of gas anymore, so they often do not get refilled.

Dan Beloin
Beloin Tree Farm

The first time I bought an electric chainsaw I couldn't help laughing. My father's first chainsaw weighed almost 100 pounds and cut slower than this little thing I'm holding. As a pro logger with over 40 years experience I've seen the evolution of chainsaws first hand. I own

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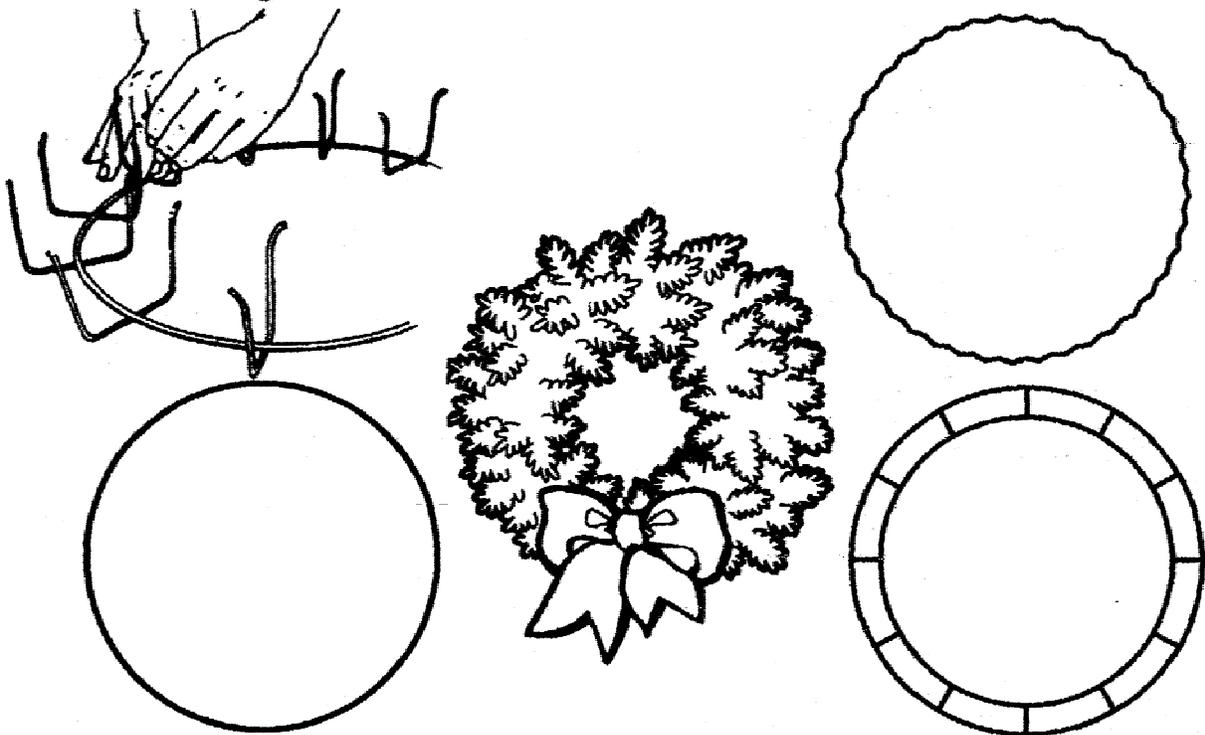
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Tool Time: Battery-Powered Chainsaws

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gasoline powered saws, electric (corded) chainsaws, and battery powered chainsaws. They all have their niche in my operation but I'm partial to the gas saws for their adaptability. Any job anytime anywhere, large trees or small the gas saw can handle it, as long as it is sharp. I've often said I owe my success to knowing how to properly sharpen a chainsaw. A dull saw will break your back and your bank account at the same time. You simply cannot be efficient with a dull saw. This is even more important with an electric or battery powered saw because they don't have the power to muscle through the cut.

I purchased an electric (corded) chainsaw for each of my three retail lots years ago. The instant on and off of the electric motor coupled with ease of operation and being quieter than a gas saw makes it the perfect tool for trimming tree butts at the point of sale. Many people are afraid of chainsaws and that includes employees. Things can go bad in a hurry with a chainsaw so ease of operation gives me some peace of mind. The model I use has a 16-inch bar and cost around \$70 to \$90 depending on the store. They last several seasons as long as I keep them sharp.

The battery saw I have now is made by Oregon and it does very well in the right applica-

tion. Freedom of movement is a plus over the electric saw with its cord, but it's not as powerful. It's great on the retail lot as long as you keep a spare battery handy. Some backyard pruning or rough cut carpentry jobs would be a good fit also. My problem with it is the price. At \$385 without a spare battery, it's expensive. Add in a spare chain and you're close to \$500. The reason I bought one anyway is the self-sharpening feature on the Oregon. Sharpening a saw is easy for me but not many people know how to do it right and I'm not always around. Anyone can sharpen this saw in five seconds and keep going. I imagine the evolution of chainsaws isn't over yet.

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A National Perspective

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from those held on site because of the commitment of attending the National Board meeting, the Christmas Spirit Foundation meeting (Trees for Troops) and I chose to attend the first half of the Promotion Board meeting, which is a public meeting. The National Association and the T4T meetings run for four hours, the Promotion Board meeting eight hours, this gives the scope of the commitment of the people on the various boards.

Update on the National Christmas Tree Association
 The National organization has a new company managing it. As the Check Off kicked in, some national members did not renew



their memberships which may be a misplaced notion that the Promotion Board can do what the National was doing for its members, this is not the case. The National represents tree growers in *advocacy and policy* which is extremely important to the industry. There are several “big” issues which are being represented through the lobbying efforts of a partnership with the Nurserymen’s Association. The National pays \$35,000 towards the costs of the lobbyist that

represents tree growers in discussions with about EPA, workers for farms etc. This is an important and cost-effective way of getting the industries voice heard in DC. There is a tree shortage this year on the national scale which is the best time to get the promotions for the industries up and running as growers have enough money to invest. Tree prices are rising, which helps everyone. NH/VT growers will probably have calls for wholesale trees from all over the U.S. this year. The number of trees being planted is also on the rise so we will once again have the cyclical too-many-trees in about five to seven years.

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National Activities

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Update on the Christmas Tree Promotion Board

The Promotion Board had a good first year and is looking at a budget of about \$1.3 million for this year. The feedback from consumers was good and the marketing ideas will expand on those that were successful. Every grower can get onto the web site to see how to get involved and be a part of the promotion. Videos of farms in the five areas of the country represented by the board are being made this year. This will give a



more local feel to the tree farms. As the budget is small, for a national campaign a lot of the promotion will be done through social media and be pin pointing the millennials as they will be our biggest market in the future.

Update on Trees for Troops

Nationally, this year we are trying to increase the number of trees donated to the program so that we can get over 18,000 trees to military families. Response has been good so far but with fewer trees around it will be more difficult to get trees donated. Growers should remember that good quality short trees are fine as many trees to servicemen and women with smaller houses or apartments. We did have a couple of in-



stances last year where really bad trees were donated; growers should not do this. The idea is to give someone a tree that they would be proud of displaying. The Trees for Troops program won the Hope Award, after being nominated by the Coast Guard this year. This award is given by the armed forces to a program that instills hope to military families. It was brought into effect and named after Bob Hope.

NH/VT growers interested in donating trees this year can contact Nigely Manley at info@therocks.org



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