

California Christmas Tree Association

the bulletin brief

January / February 2017



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President's Message

It's December 24th 1pm, an hour past advertised closing. Finding it hard to smile and greet my customers with a joyful Christmas Welcome. I've closed the entry gate 2 times, to no avail! As I wait for a customer to select a tree I attempt to close the gate once again. A Dad and young boy approach, a frequent customer I recognized immediately. The Dad requested to come in because his son missed their annual tree cutting at the farm because he was sick and he just wanted to say goodbye to the farm. What could I say? I opened the gate as they gathered the rest of the family. They thanked me, and walked in near the fire area. The little boy stood there and as he turned looking around he shouting at the top of his voice "Goodbye Ducks! Goodbye Chickens! Goodbye Farm!"

Sooo sweet.....And this is why I do what I do. The gate closed finally around 1:30; wow what I would have missed if I had been the grinch I was feeling like.

Another successful year gone. I sincerely hope that the season was rewarding for you all. Talking to a few of you, it seems the selling season gets shorter and shorter every year. A lot of farms due to tree shortage closed quite early. It is hard to see choose and cut customers continue to cut an already depleted tree selection. The last couple of days we chose to reduce our fresh cut Douglas fir to persuade customers to not take anymore of our 2017 choose and cut inventory. As you all know the choose and cut tradition is a special family memory for many, it's not so much about the tree it's the experience! It's very hard to say No to choose and cut tree cutting.

Although it happened a little late for our 2016 season, I was happy to see that the National Promotional committee launched the new Real Tree Promotional campaign. Honestly I as many of you were so involved with our already in full swing 2016 season that I did not have time to check it all out. I will check it out now as we recap our season and debrief, I hope you all will find time to check out what's going on with the campaign.

Continued on next page

NCTA Sponsored Conifer Genetics and Tree Improvement Webinar Series

In this 5 part webinar series,, leading Christmas tree scientists will present an in-depth discussion of the critical elements of Christmas tree improvement and how genetic selection can improve the growth, health and quality of your crops and make your farm more profitable

Webinar Schedule:

Feb. 1 The Tree Improvement process: Selection, Testing & Breeding
Feb. 8 Capturing Genetic Gain: Seed Collection zones and Seed orchards
Feb. 15 Tree Improvement Techniques: Grafting, Controlled-pollination & Tissue culture
Feb. 22 Tree Improvement Case Studies from around the country and around the world
March 1 Future issues: Genetic Engineering and Genomics of Fir Species

Program is free but you need to register at: [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events/Christmas tree genetics and tree improvement webinar series](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events/Christmas%20tree%20genetics%20and%20tree%20improvement%20webinar%20series)



CCTA Annual Meeting • March 4th, 2017 • Santa Nella, CA

Roundtable Topic: Share your Selling Experiences

2016 was a very encouraging year for CCTA as we had several new members join our Association. And I don't think any of them are septuagenarians like me. You can meet some of them at our Annual Meeting on March 4 in Santa Nella, CA.

Another reason you should come is for a chance to win a valuable prize supplied by Target Specialty Products in our popular Best Idea Contest. And we want to hear about your selling season and any concerns or issues you have about growing or selling Christmas Trees. See you in Santa Nella.

- Sam Minturn

National Directors Report

by Joe McNally

I survived another Christmas Tree selling season, now it's time to make those required payments to tax collectors and others like memberships that look after our farming and retail interests. We get much more bang for our buck when professionals represent our industry. At NCTA (National) the new management team Tim O'Connor and Associates, are also the management team for the Christmas Tree Promotion Board (checkoff) and Christmas Spirit Foundation (501 c 3). The efficiency of one management team is maximizing the synergy, communication and coordination between the organizations. This team also brings a great deal of experience and a member focused approach to NCTA.

Three examples of media experience are listed here:

Christmas Trees in DC

As has been the tradition since 1966, the National Christmas Tree Association was well represented at our nation's capital with a fresh Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House. A more recent tradition has been providing a Christmas tree for the Vice President's home as well.

Trees for Troops Delivers!

Another year is in the books for the Christmas Spirit Foundation's Trees for Troops. The program kicked off on November 15 in Indiana with dozens of volunteers boxing trees for the international shipment. This was followed by loading events in 63 locations nationwide where Christmas tree growers donated and loaded thousands of trees – most in the few days following Thanksgiving. The final base delivery date was December 9th, and with it, another successful year “in the books”.

Neil Patrick Harris Urges Fans to “Keep it Real!”

One component of the Christmas Tree Promotion Board's (CTPB) campaign this season included the involvement of actor Neil Patrick Harris who joined up with the campaign in New York City at a carefully constructed outdoor living room set, complete with couches, fireplace, a talking Christmas tree and wisecracking Nutcracker.

NCTA is becoming more focused and more effective. Priorities have narrowed to doing a better job on the things the industry has said matter most: public policy/government affairs, voice of the industry, fire Codes-and building a meaningful partnership with state and regional associations. NCTA fills a unique and critical place as the advocacy organization for the Christmas Tree Industry; a role the Christmas Tree Promotion Board, because of its checkoff funding and USDA oversight, is prohibited from fulfilling. I know we need both NCTA and CTPB to succeed for the industry to have its best possible future, and to succeed NCTA needs you helping to “row the boat”.

Ellis Schmidt, a Pennsylvania tree grower, has been leading the charge by inserting science into national guidelines regarding Christmas Tree standards for Fire Retardants. Ellis and researchers at state universities and members of ASTM International have been working toward a set of safety and testing standards for a wide variety of materials,

products, systems and services. Unfortunately the results that Ellis's group has been working toward don't satisfy The California Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM). California tends to buck national trends, or lead national trends. Currently, we Californians have two sets of rules that govern Christmas Trees in public places. If a building is unsprinkled, the Christmas tree must have a Flame retardant application, per title 19. But, if a building is sprinkled, the tree need only be displayed in water, checked daily for water level and dryness and have the but cut when placed in the stand, per the California Fire Code. Many fire inspectors are not aware of the nuances of having two separate codes, but you should educate your local fire inspector this winter before next year's seasonal rush if you expect to have trees successfully displayed in commercial occupancies. Ellis's work makes for a much improved situation when discussing/arguing with OSFM personnel.

My column would not be complete without an update on northern California water. So far, Northern CA has an above average amount of precipitation. I will give a prognostication that most of the state will have most of the water they desire, certainly from north down to the Delta as the area of origin is doing better at precipitation production so far this year. I live in the Ponderosa Pine belt, just upstream from Lake Oroville and even up here we have lost some Ponderosa Pines due to drought. Many timber areas have severe amounts of dead and dying timber. Media coverage has shown that the Central Sierra has been hardest hit by drought conditions so that the Ponderosa Pine belt has taken a sever mortality hit. Too many trees per acre with limited precipitation for too many years have and is causing problems.

See you at the winter meeting in Santa Nella.

Joe McNally & Anne Benoit • ctree@c-zone.net

Results are in for Trees for Troops Program

The 2016 Trees for Troops Campaign was once again a tremendous success. Throughout the nation over 17,141 trees were donated to military families both abroad, and stateside. In California, 325 trees were donated as well as a financial contribution of \$1,625, which represents \$5 for each tree donated.

A special Thank You goes to Anthony Dal Bello, a major contributor to the grower program, and to Ralph Jacob, for coordinating and staffing the American Legion booth at Battaglia Ranch Tree Farm.

Grower Participants: Battaglia Ranch - Paul & Ed Battaglia, San Martin, CA • Anthony's Christmas Trees, Santa Barbara, CA • Christmas Ranch Tree Farm - Don & Marilyn Cameron, Simi Valley, CA • Greenwood Tree Farm - Liz Phillips, Greenwood, CA • Hilmar CTF - Sam & Janet Minturn, Hilmar, CA • Pine Country Christmas Tree Farm - Will & Diann Martin, Gustine, CA • Snowy Peaks Christmas Tree Farm - Jim & Ginger Armstrong, Long Barn, CA • Twain Harte Tree Farm - Don & Peggy Moore, Twain Harte, CA

Trailer Drop Participants: American Legion Dist 13 - Ralph Jacob, coordinator, San Jose, CA • American Legion Post 419, Santa Clara, CA • Santa Cruz Host Lions Club, Santa Cruz, CA • Voiture 365, Santa Clara, CA

News from the Southern Section

by Nancy Roatcap
www.nancysranch.com

Another season down memory lane! I am looking forward to our meeting in Santa Nella and hearing everyone's stories about selling Christmas trees. This year I had more dry trees than ever before, but only amounting to 10 or so. Still a great record when you sell as many as I do.

But here is my thinking on this year's dry trees. I noticed we had 3 early on loads that were dry when we unloaded. Normally the trees come in wet. We had abominably dry weather with the dust churning up in the parking lot and drifting back over the sales area. And another reason.. had I known it was in the making I could have prevented it. My long-time helper found a better paying job and abandoned me just as we were setting up the week of Thanksgiving. His chores fell to me and I didn't get them all done. Among them, keeping the water bowls and storage ponds full. The ponds leaked badly this year due to the help dropping the trees in trunk first, leaving half-moon shaped slices in the plastic liners and making them harder than ever to keep full.

Otherwise things went smoothly until the second Sunday in December. We didn't have enough staff to keep the sales floor stocked and help the customers. The plan was for each tree sold to be replaced by the helper who sold it. Around 5pm we were out of 6/7 and 7/8 Nobles on the sales floor and people were walking out. This was a scheduling failure.

Scheduling the help is one of the most complicated jobs of the season. The help are mostly college or high school students and everyone has a different schedule, and a party, funeral or final they forgot they had to go to. I take their schedule on Saturday and work their available hours into the schedule for the next week, then call to make sure they know when to come in. Even so, "I didn't know I was on the schedule," is a common refrain.

Mulling over my failure that Sunday to keep up with the demand I remembered our old "Shakee Schedule." No one liked Shakee duty... it was dusty and relentless with all the Monterey's coming out of the field full of old dry needles. They would rather be chasing down customers for tips (which is what they would do if you weren't watching.) So, I came up with a schedule that planted 2 or 3 helpers at the Shakee and two at the baler for the critical hours, and the boys rotated through without too much complaint, each putting in 2 hours. They were required to eat before or after Shakee duty.

However, I am no longer a tree grower, and the old Shakee schedule fell by the wayside as we just didn't need it

anymore, or so I thought! I wasn't sure I still had a hard copy of the form but after digging around in my files there it was! And, looking at it I knew I had my solution. Shakee schedule would be renamed "Restocking schedule" and put to work that next weekend without a hitch. I now have a good template for next year's scheduling.

In other business our president Jerilynn Seifert got me on the phone today to inform me that as your Vice President I will be conducting our meeting in March at Santa Nella. Ms. Seifert had a trip planned, tickets bought and people notified before she and our executive director found that it was an overlap with our annual meeting. I was hoping something like this wouldn't happen on my watch as I feel completely inadequate to step into her shoes!

In spite of it all, see you all in Santa Nella!

President's Message (Cont'd)

Sam has been spending a good amount of time on seed acquisition and nurseries who can grow them for us. Many of you have ordered seedlings. Sam is working on delivery dates to Silveyville, where you will pick them up. There is a possibility we could save a good amount of money on shipping if we can arrange pickup of the 2017 seedlings from Mountain Crest Nursery near the Oregon border. Sam will have more information on seed acquisition and propagation for the 2019 season.

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the annual meeting in Santa Nella on March 3rd. We have had a big family vacation planned with flights and tickets already purchased. We will be taking my mom to see her older sister in Florida where our children and grand children will join us for a fun filled trip to Disney World making lasting family memories. We have a great board Vice President in Nancy, she will lead a great meeting. I will miss you all. I will especially miss hearing about all the 2016 season happenings.

Happy New Year to all! I look forward, with you, to a "building year" in 2017.

FREE AD SPACE ON CCTA WEB SITE



The On-Line Bulletin Board is free to CCTA members. Let us help you with your purchasing, selling, trucking, cultural, etc. needs. Call (209) 669-6668 or e-mail to CalifCTA@aol.com to have your information posted on this web site.

Welcome New Members

Marla Courtney Anderson, Courtney's Christmas Tree Farm, Royal Oaks, CA

Amy & Cory George, George Family Farms, Atascadero, CA

Dan O'Callaghan, O'Callaghan Ranch, San Juan Bautista,

Lena & Eric Rhodes, Myers Christmas Tree Farm, Camino, CA

Jeffery Ruggieri, Christmas Ranch Tree Farms, Simi Valley, Ca

California Christmas Tree Association

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The Bulletin is a membership publication of the California Christmas Tree Association, a non-profit organization, by and for its members. The Bulletin is published four times per year in January, April, July, and October. The deadline for advertising material and other copy is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Members and others are encouraged to submit articles, announcements, photographs, drawings, news and views concerning any aspect of the California Christmas tree industry. Submit all materials for publication to the CCTA office. The Bulletin staff and the California Christmas Tree Association, however, assume no responsibility for accuracy and validity of claims in advertising and editorial reports. Opinions expressed by writers in by-lined articles are their own and not necessarily those of this magazine or CCTA.

HERE'S A WAY TO IMPROVE YOUR TREE BUSINESS

Your free Sales Survey Analysis can be one of the most important tools that each member has to help with the planning of your future operation. Each year questionnaires are sent to members and returned anonymously with many types of information. Around the last week of February the CCTA office collects the information and submits them to former CCTA president Roger Schafer, who processes them in a computer program that provides valuable data for each of the five districts in California. Included are both choose-and-cut sales and pre-cut tree sales.

This analysis provides all kinds of usable information, such as average price and price-per-foot of sales, average percentages of the different species sold, average size of farms, average years members have sold trees, average degree of sales satisfaction compared to previous years and an historical comparison of average tree prices to the U. S. Department of Labor Consumer Price Index.

You can use these valuable tools to plan your strategies for selection of species as well as planning your pricing program in your area. For those who have had trees stolen or destroyed, this information can be used to establish the fair-market value of your insurance claim. Request this free Sales Survey Analysis from the CCTA office, usually available in mid-March.



Swift Silver Seedlings

Do you prefer BLUE or GREEN white fir? CCTA is buying some Swift Silver seed and will be growing seedlings for CCTA members that want to grow some Swift Silver white firs. We have already contacted all of our white fir growers that we know of but if we missed you and want some seedlings, just email me at CalifCTA@aol.com. We haven't chosen a nursery yet but expect it to take 2 years to get large enough seedlings. Thanks to Richard Schmitt for initiating this.



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