

# California Christmas Tree Association

## the bulletin brief

January / February 2018



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Executive Director

Betty Starr,  
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### Presidents Report 1/16/18

There's a first time for everything. Yes we closed our farm December 22nd this year. Never before have we closed our farm before Christmas Eve. Since we have always made it a priority to be one of the only choose and cut farms to have this experience available right up until Christmas Eve, it was an emotional decision for us, emotional but necessary. If we are to continue to bring an enjoyable positive experience to our customers we need to take care of our aging bodies, and enjoy the joyous season that Christmas is. We enjoy what we do, and want to continue, now is the time to gracefully make some adjustments.

We slept in, had breakfast with friends, took in the Nut Cracker on stage before Christmas this year, a first for Ted and me, Mom thoroughly enjoyed it. I actually baked! A hard decision, but so glad we made it.

The other first for us this year was closing our choose and cut fields early. We choose to not allow anymore cutting as of Monday Dec. 18th. We have experienced over cutting over the last several years and we really had no option. We contribute the shortage of choose and cut trees to the consistent increase in sales over the last several years and trees lost to disease late in the growing season. We continue to battle disease issues and we have planted just under an acre of new trees over the last 2 years. We should start benefiting from our new planting this year.

Those of you that I have spoken to reported a better than average season. We experienced the same, could things be turning around? Ted and I spent a lot of time this year promoting Real Tree sales with the national promotion boards Campaign "It's Christmas Keep it Real". We had two Farm interviews, attended the Old Sacramento tree lighting where we spoke with the media and Ted had an in studio interview with a local radio station.

I know the fresh cut tree business this year was a bit of a challenge. I understand this could go on for a number of years. We personally brought in a few less trees, and just about

*Continued on next page*

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

*By Sam Minturn*

We need to talk. I don't think there has ever been a year like 2017 in the history of CCTA. From the forest fires to the mud slide in Montecito to record Christmas tree sales we'd love to hear your story. You can do this by attending our Annual Meeting on March 3 in Santa Nella. You've already received registration for it so we hope you decide to come - especially if it's your first time or it's been awhile. And we have a great prize for the winner of the Best Idea.

We are also making a change on the CCTA Website for the location of our Summer and Fall Bulletins and next year for the Bulletin Brief. They are currently available on line for the entire world to read and we've decided this should be for CCTA Members only. So it will be moved to the Member Resources section of the website and you will need to know your User Name and Password to open it. In the past you have been told your User Name and Password but I'm guessing you might have forgotten it so just email me and we'll be happy to refresh your memory or give you a new one if you never received that info.

Looking ahead, those of you in the Northern & Central CCTA Sections need to mark June 2 on your calendars for our meeting at Little Bear Tree Farm in Alta. Kevin & Holly Besner are hosting us and this farm is one of the top ones in the state so plan ahead to be there. They might even let you catch a fish in their beautiful ponds. Holly will also be a new CCTA Board member soon, so if you have some ideas on how to make CCTA better, I'm sure she'd be happy to hear them. For those of you in the Southern Section, Nancy Roatcap will let you know when their next meeting will be.

I'm predicting 2018 will be much better than 2017. Enjoy!

-- "Uncle Sam"

# Another Wonderful Year of Giving with Trees for Troops Program

By Paul Battaglia, Chairman, Christmas Spirit Foundation



The Christmas Spirit Foundation celebrated their Trees for Troops 13th Anniversary by announcing that the 200,000th Christmas tree had been donated to the Trees for Troops program this last season. Since the foundation was established in 2005, over 800 growers have generously donated 208,720 Christmas trees to military families.

In 2017, growers from 24 states donated 17,470 Christmas trees that were sent to 26 bases stateside, and 4 bases overseas.

Thank you to the following California participants who generously donated Christmas trees to the 2017 campaign:

- Anthony and Maria Dal Bello, Anthony's Christmas Trees & Wreaths, Santa Barbara, CA
- Joe McNally and Anne Benoit, Mountain View Tree Farm, Paradise, CA
- Sam and Janet Minturn, Hilmar Forest Tree Farm, Hilmar, CA
- Will and Sheri Martin, Pine Country Christmas Tree Farm, Gustine, CA
- John and Tina Bourdet, Bourdet's Christmas Tree Farm, Hollister, CA
- Paul and Ed Battaglia, Battaglia Ranch Christmas Tree Farm, San Martin, CA
- Linda Alameda-Strawn, Santa Cruz Host Lions Club, Santa Cruz, CA
- San Tomas Voiture 365, San Jose, CA

Special recognition and thanks go to Ralph Jacob, who organized and coordinated all the volunteers from American Legion Post 13, San Jose; American Legion Post 419, Santa Clara, CA; American Legion Post 99, Campbell, CA; and American Legion Mission City Post 564, Santa Clara, CA; who joined forces to help at the Trees for Troops Weekend Program hosted at Battaglia Ranch Tree Farm in San Martin, CA.



## CALIFORNIA Governor's Offices of Business and Economic Development

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) was created by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. to serve as California's single point of contact for economic development and job creation efforts. GO-Biz offers a range of services to business owners including: attraction, retention and expansion services, site selection, permit assistance, regulatory guidance, small business assistance, international trade development, assistance with state government, and much more.

### California Business Portal

Business just got easier with the California Business Portal. Find all the tools and resources you need to get your business up and running in California. Subheadings: Business Navigator, Business Service Desk, Financial Assistance, Quick Start Guides

### California Competes Tax Credit

The California Competes Tax Credit is an income tax credit available to businesses that want to come to California or stay and grow in California. For fiscal year 2017-18, GO-Biz will accept applications for the California Competes Tax Credit during the following periods: March 5, 2018 through March 26, 2018

### Permit Assistance

GO-Biz has permit specialists ready to answer all your permit questions. Information provided here can be used to help you in your research to determine what specific federal, state, regional, or local permits that may be needed for your business.

### California Made

California is a world leader in innovation, style, and quality goods. Is your product made in California? Certify your product as CA Made. This program supports all products manufactured in the state that meet the requirements, including apparel, furniture, software, art, household goods, handmade items, toys, and cosmetics.

Find these sites and more at: <http://business.ca.gov/>

### President's Message (Cont'd)

sold out. Last year we had more trees left than desired, so the decision to bring in a few less was good one.

We had a positive experience this year with social media. We bit the bullet and hired our Texas daughter to handle our website correspondence as well as our Facebook page, WHAT A GOOD DECISION! She did a great job and responded promptly to the many questions and inquiries as well as a few negative comments. It's true people are majorly using social media, and it matters that we respond.

I trust that you all are recouping and resting up, Happy New Year. I look forward to seeing you all in Santa Nella at our annual meeting.

--- Jeri Seifert

**News from the  
Southern Section  
by Nancy Roatcap  
www.nancysranch.com**



**Winter 2017-18**

How can I describe this last selling season?? Parched, dry and hot, first come to mind. When the humidity dropped down below 10%, 60 mph Santa Ana winds blew through the valley corridor, and without a drop of rain through October and November the horizon lit up with devastating wildfires. Lucky for me the Santa Ana winds blow in from the desert, East to West, I stayed East of the Valencia fire which started just a mile from the tree lot. The fire that started in Santa Paula, known as the Thomas fire, was a few miles North of the tree farm there and blew on West... all the way to the beach towns of Santa Barbara and Carpinteria.

The fires didn't reach me but the trees suffered from the low humidity and punishing winds. I put over 150 mostly Noble firs in the "burn pile," as we called it, that dried out on the lot. Add that to the "tree shortage" everyone was talking about (couldn't get some of what I wanted) and the result: Sold out on the 23rd. First Christmas Eve off in 33 years!

Has anyone noticed? More trees on the trucks. Precuts are less weighty, tall trees narrower. During our last "tree glut" farmers of precuts had to hold down tree growth to keep the trees marketable. This resulted in weighty, wide trees with fat handles hard to get into a flimsy K-Mart stand. Now those fat trees are gone and farmers are trying to get the most height out of the trees possible, resulting in slimmer trees with lighter handles, and in some cases, trees barely into their size category.

Mostly, I like this trend. More trees on the truck mean less deliveries. Lighter trees mean less backaches. However, when the new wannabe Christmas tree farmers plantings mature into millions of 6/7' Nobles, we will once again be looking at fat handles and heavy trees, I would say around 2026.

In spite of the fierce weather and big burn pile, my tree lot did well. A few percentage points off of 2016, but I think I would have sold most of those trees in the burn pile if I had them, and that would have put me even with last years stats.

We had punishing weather all through December with our first frost coming mid month. Normally we get a frost in October. Today is the 9th of January and I am enjoying our first winter storm. In the last 24 hours we have had 4.5 inches of rain.

**California Agritourism Adventures Await!**

Agricultural tourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment and education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner or operator.

Agritourism can include farm stands or shops, U-pick, farm stays, tours, on-farm classes, fairs, festivals, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, Christmas tree farms, winery weddings, orchard dinners, youth camps, barn dances, hunting or fishing, guest ranches, and more.

There are many websites devoted to California agritourism. The UC Small Farm Program, working with county-based UC Cooperative Extension farm advisors, provides resources for agritourism operators and hosts California's statewide directory and calendar of agritourism operations. Check out their resources for agritourism operators at [www.sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism](http://www.sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism).

CalAgTour.org is a statewide directory of agritourism operations. Farms and ranches: It's free to sign up online. List your activities and events.

Visitcalifornia.com encourages visitors to experience California's bounty first hand, from u-pick strawberry farms to overnights where you can milk cows and gather eggs—or just sit down to an artfully-rendered farm-to-table feast. Even if you're road-tripping around the state, there are countless classic farm stands in small towns (some with wine-tasting), while the big cities pull out all the stops at their farmers' markets, lined with producers, food trucks, gourmet coffee, and live music.

Whether you're visiting a winery, pumpkin patch, corn-maze, or U-pick farm, agritourism destinations teach consumers about agriculture in fun and interesting ways.

Need a permit? Use this resource: <http://www.calgold.ca.gov>. Type in your city and you will get a list with contact info of all government agencies in your area.

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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 three times per year in Winter Summer, and Fall. 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 have chosen a nursery and expect it to take one year to get large enough seedlings. Thanks to Richard Schmitt for initiating this.



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