

Summer/Fall 2026

The CCTA NEWSLETTER



President's Message

By Mark Scheberies

As you'll see from Paul Illingworth's write up in this issue, the CCTA Spring Meeting at Patchen Christmas Tree Farm turned out very well. I'd like to give a big thank you to Battaglia Ranch for their generous sponsorship of lunch and Brookshire Farms for their sponsorship of morning coffee and pastries.

Please mark your calendar for our upcoming meeting at Castro Valley Tree Farm on Saturday, August 29th. This will be a very hands on meeting. We hope to see everyone there.

I wish to thank Ted Seifert and Paul Battaglia, who after decades of service to CCTA will be stepping down. Ted will be stepping down from his position as Treasurer and also from his role as a Director. Paul will be stepping down from his position as a Director. Both Ted and Paul have contributed many hours in support of our organization and we wish them well.

This is the perfect time for you to consider running for a Director or Treasurer Position within CCTA. If you are interested, please reach out and let us know.

Directors

Mark Scheberies, President
Alhambra Christmas Tree Farm
2647 Reliez Valley Rd
Martinez, CA 94553

Keith Garlock, Secretary
Garlock Christmas Trees
2275 Bloomfield Rd
Sebastapol, CA 95472

Ted Seifert, Treasurer
Silveyville Christmas Tree Farm
6248 Silveyville Rd
Dixon, CA 95620

Paul Battaglia
Battaglia Ranch Christmas Tree Farm
13580 Murphy Ave
San Martin, CA 95046

Paul Illingworth, News Editor
Castro Valley Christmas Tree Farm
18549 Carlton Ave.
Castro Valley, CA 94546

Shawn Callaway
Brookshire Farms
14270 Morningside Dr.
Atascadero, CA 93422

Tyler Stokes
Family Christmas Tree Farm
300 Pepper Dr.
El Cajon, CA 92021

Highlight a Tree

This is the second in a series of articles that will highlight a species of tree that can be grown in California as a Christmas tree. The species to be highlighted in this issue is the:

White fir or Concolor fir (*Abies concolor*)

The white fir is a popular true fir Christmas tree grown in the western United States and can be grown at elevations from sea level to 7,500 feet, tolerating warm summer temperatures and cold down to -22 degrees F. The tree retains a pyramidal shape throughout its life and has an open "layered" look that requires a minimal amount of culturing. It is one of the fastest growing true firs. It has flattened, soft needles that are green to silvery-green in color that curve upward on branches and have a citrusy scent. There are three varieties of white fir grown as Christmas trees in California:

**Abies concolor* subsp. *concolor* – This is the most popular variety for Christmas trees because of its silvery blue-green color and soft needles. The most popular seed comes from the Apache National Forest in Arizona. This variety is often commonly referred to as a Concolor Fir.

**Abies concolor* subsp. *lowiana* – This variety is commonly called Sierra white fir because its natural range is in the Sierra mountains of California. Its needles are a bit shorter, less upcurved and a darker green color than the Apache variety.

**Abies concolor* subsp. "Swift's Silver" – This is a very sought after variety as a Christmas tree because of its soft silvery-green needles. The seeds come from a small stand of trees in Colorado and are very limited, so the seedlings for this variety are not often available in wholesale seedling nurseries.

Quick Facts

- *The fastest growing of the true fir, 6 - 9 year rotation
- *Green to silvery-blue color, 1"-2", soft needles
- *Needs no to minimal pruning and maintenance
- *Open, layered look
- *Grows in sandy, clay loam, and clay soils
- *Grows at low elevations and can tolerate warm temps.
- *Grows at elevation up to 7500' in temps. down to -22 F.
- *Grows well in full or partial sunlight, shade tolerant
- *Diseases: needle-cast, phytophthora
- *Insects: aphids, adelgids
- *Customers love this tree, especially the Swift's Silver

The CCTA currently contracts Cal Forest Nursery to grow white fir seedlings from seed collected in California, but will not have any available for planting in 2027.

Fall Field Day & Annual Meeting

August 29, 2026

Castro Valley Christmas Tree Farm
Castro Valley, CA

Membership Renewal

It's not too late to pay your dues for membership to the CCTA. This is the only way that you can be assured of receiving the Newsletter and getting information about future events. You can renew your membership on the CCTA Website.

White (Concolor) Fir



"Apache" Concolor Fir



Sierra White Fir



"Swift's Silver" White Fir

Seedling Sales

By Ted Seifert &
Paul Illingworth



Monterey cypress (blue)
Seedlings are available
through the CCTA.



The CCTA Seedling Program

The **CCTA Seedling Program** supports the CCTA and provides quality seedlings at a low cost to our members. The cost for the seedlings will still be only \$1 each plus shipping. We are trying to increase the quantity ordered so that this program allows CCTA to expand by having additional funds to support new programs.

CCTA Seedlings for 2026 – We have 2 species of seedlings available for purchase through the CCTA for planting in 2027 – Monterey pine, and Monterey cypress (blue and green variety). Monterey pine – We will have a large quantity of M. pines available grown in plugs, and a limited amount of Monterey cypress of the blue and green variety. Order through Ted Seifert at (707) 365-4223 or ted@tedseifert.com

CCTA Monterey pine Seedling trial for 2026 – A special planting of Monterey pine seedlings has been sewn for the 2027 planting season. These seedlings (see above) have been grown from seeds collected from Monterey pines growing in California. We will see how these compare to the trees grown from the GF-17 New Zealand seed.

White Fir -The CCTA has grown white fir from seed collected in California in the past. However, this year we were unable to contract grow white fir seedlings for 2027, but we will have some for the 2028 planting season. If you have any questions about the program, please contact Ted Seifert (707) 365-4223, ted@tedseifert.com or Paul Illingworth (510) 634-2186, cvtreefarm@gmail.com

Christmas Tree Nurseries – It is important to order seedlings early so you can plant the variety and seed source that is best for your area. Some wholesale nurseries that produce Christmas tree species in the west are: Cal Forest (CA), Holloway (CA), Kintigh (OR), Ponto (CA), Drake's Crossing (OR), Brooke's (OR) Lava (OR). Go to their Websites and see if they have the seedlings you want – but order early.

The Website – <https://cachristmas.com>

Have you been having trouble maneuvering around the CCTA Website – can't access the Research Library, can't register or pay for meetings? That is all about to change. The CCTA has hired Brenda Bell (McBurney Tree Farm) and purchased a new program to organize CCTA business, including the Website. The Website will be refurbished with a new look and a much-improved ease of use. The Research Library will be accessible with added information and articles. Membership dues and meeting registration and payment will be easier to accomplish. Be patient during the transition period, but it will be worth the wait. We look forward to the "New Look" CCTA Website.



Notes From the Editor by Paul Illingworth

There are many changes coming to the CCTA in the next few months. Brenda Bell has been hired to refurbish the CCTA Website through a new software program. See above for more information about improvements in the Website. At the Annual Meeting on August 29, 2 new Board Members will be elected and the New Bylaws will be presented and voted upon. Look in your email for Board Member nominations and the revised Bylaws.

CCTA Spring Field Day at Patchen C.T.F.

What a great day it was at the Patchen Christmas Tree Farm for the Spring Field Day. Our host, Jim Beck, was gracious and generous and toured us around the historic farm providing a lot of information on growing and selling Christmas trees including:

- *Be organized at the sales area with netting, tie straps, Fresh- Patches, stands, bio bags. He presented a product called “Crystal Fresh for putting in the water stand to keep the tree fresh.
- *Have a multitude of species of trees to offer to the customers
- *3 year rotation chip program on the ground to maintain moisture in the soil and manage weeds
- *The importance of stump culture to maintain tree production



- *Production area for making laser decorated wood products
- *The area where they have the pumpkin patch and wine tasting which is a very good money-making activity

Marina showed us many hand-made add-on products that they sell to increase profits

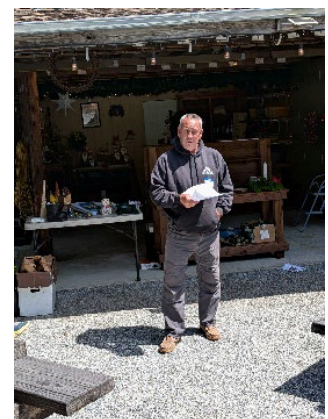
Farm manager, Salvador, demonstrated how to eliminate gophers by trapping, claiming the “Cinch” trap is the best. Crystal from Crest Farm said she also has success by using the “Gopher Hawk” trap.



Paul Illingworth gave a presentation on seedlings and tips on planting. Some highlights of his presentation are:

- *Seedlings are sold as bareroot, plugs, slips, and containers
- *Bareroots are designated 1-0, 2-0, 2-1 based on how long they are in the nursery – 1-0 is one year, 2-0 two years, etc.
- *Plug designation is based on how much soil is in the container
- *Knowing the seed zone is important in choosing seeding – species covered were Monterey pine, Douglas-fir, true fir and cypress
- *How a nursery packs the seedlings is important to survival – plastic bag surrounding the roots, large bag holding the seedlings, and a sturdy box are ideal. Make sure roots are moist
- *How a grower handles the seedling is also important – keep box in a cool shady area, keeps roots moist and out of the sun, plant seedlings within a few days and don’t leave them in the box
- *Planting methods were discussed – machine, auger, planting bar, planting shovel, dibble

Sean Callaway gave a presentation about add-ons that increase profits. He said that it’s important to create a plan for your add-ons including display area, storage, purchasing, ordering, delivery, pricing, and sales personnel. Some of the add-ons to consider are precut trees, netting, shakers, stands, flocking, wreaths, garland, mistletoe, mini trees, decorations, drinks, food and shirts and items with the tree farm logo on them. He warned that some add-ons such as food, drink, fireproofing and flocking might require permits and/or permission from the county or city.



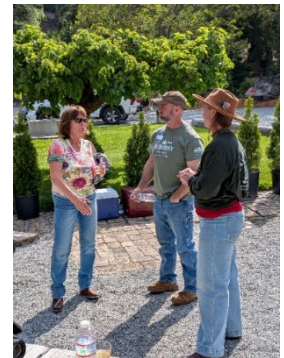
A spirited round table discussion was headed by Mark Scheberies on marketing techniques. It was generally recognized that traditional advertising is not effective and many tree farms are utilizing social media like farm website, Facebook, Instagram, influencers, and YouTube. Also, inviting television and newspaper reporters to the farm to do Christmas stories is helpful. Getting involved in the community can also make the tree farm more visible to the public.

Of course there were plenty of snacks available throughout the day and a scrumptious lunch catered by a local Deli. But the most important thing was the opportunity to get together with other growers and share ideas and stories about the Christmas tree industry.



A big thank you to Jim Beck, Marina Johnson, and Salvadore Venegas for sharing their information and hosting the CTA Spring Meeting.

We are looking forward to the Annual Meeting and Field Day at Castro Valley Christmas Tree Farm on August 29, 2026. Election of new Board Members and voting on the Bylaws changes will be held, along with hands on activities, including shearing demos on different species, stump culture demos, and much more.



NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The CCTA Board of Directors met on March 1, 2026 in Los Gatos. Here is a summary of the decisions made at that meeting.

Members present: Mark Scheberies, Keith Garlock, Shawn Calloway, Paul Illingowrth

*It was unanimously approved to purchase multifunctional software to maintain the website, including membership, Newsletter, seedling sales, Research Library, payment of dues and meetings, and other tasks. It was also approved to hire Brenda Bell (McBurney C.T.F., Auburn) to develop a new CCTA website and maintain the website through a program such as WildApricot throughout the year.

*Tyler Stokes (Family C.T.F., El Cajon) was appointed to the Board of Directors to fill a vacancy.

* It was decided to move the annual membership meeting to the fall meeting. At which 2 new directors will be elected and the revised bylaws will be voted upon.

*Shawn Calloway was appointed chairman of the budget Committee and will be responsible for setting up a yearly budget for the CCTA.

An official copy of the CCTA Board of Directors meeting can be obtained from the CCTA offices.



Nursery Listings – What do They Mean

When we order seedlings from a nursery, sometimes the words and numbers in the availability listings are confusing. Here are two typical listings of seedlings (in red) and an explanation of what the words and numbers mean.

Abies concolor – Apache (2-0); 5-10" 100:\$1.32, 200:\$0.71, 1000:\$0.66

White Fir – Apache

*Abies concolor – The scientific name, Genus - Abies, specie – concolor

*Apache – The seed source (where the seed was collected) This one is from The Apache National Forest in Arizona.

*White fir – Apache - This is the common name

*(2-0); - (Bareroot,no soil) Age of the seedling, 2 years in the nursery, 0 years in a transplant bed,

* 5-10" - The size range of the seedlings that will be shipped

*100:\$1.32 etc. Price per seedling when you buy 100, 200, or 1000 seedlings

Abies concolor – Apache (Plug); Styro 8 200:\$0.65, 1000:\$0.60

White Fir – Apache

*See Above for scientific name, common name, and seed source

*(Plug) – Seedlings grown in a cylindrical container with soil

*Styro 8 – The size of the container, In this case 8" long, 130 ml. capacity

*200:\$0.65 etc. – The price per seedling when you buy 200 or 1000 seedlings



Shearing Tools – Which is your favorite

Hand Pruners - \$75 – Used for close-in work and cutting individual branches. Can be used for pruning true fir, and also for hand pruning the tops of most species. Can also clip out cross branches, but usually not used for shearing trees.

Hedge Shears - \$40 – Used for detailed work on most species. Can be used to shear trees but is slower than a shearing knife or machine. Can also be purchased with long handles.



Shearing knife - \$80 – The most popular shearing tool. Made of stainless steel that keeps an edge but is hard to sharpen and is brittle. Can be purchased with a short or longer wooden handle. Used by swinging the knife downward at the proper angle and cutting off all growth beyond the arc of the blade. Very fast shearing device but takes practice to learn. "Brushking" is the best brand.

Beneke Rotary Trimmer - \$700-\$1000 – A popular machine shearing device. Comes in a gas powered or electric model. Can be used to shear trees by swinging it up and down at the correct angle. Can not be used for pruning individual branches and is hard to cut tops properly.



Gas Powered Hedge Shears - \$700 – Becoming more popular with growers. Shears trees with an up and down angled swing. Must be kept sharp because it can damage the needles, especially on long needle pines.

So which one do you like the best?