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**Tree and Seedling Supply Shortage?
Transitioning to the Next Generation/Owner?
Value Gained from Genetic Tree Improvements?**



Save the Dates August 10-12, 2017!
ANNUAL CONFERENCE, WYTHEVILLE, VA



NCTA Hosting National Christmas Tree Contest in Wisconsin

Qualified growers from across the country are encouraged to travel to Green Bay, Wisconsin in August to compete in the National Christmas Tree and Wreath Contest. The contest will take place on August 18 at the Radisson Hotel in Green Bay. Registration and instruction kits will soon be sent to state association offices with detailed information on the contest.

The contest will be just one event in a convergence of Christmas tree industry happenings that week. The National Christmas Tree Association Board of Directors will be meeting at the same location on August 16. The following day, the Christmas Tree Promotion Board as well as the Christmas Spirit Foundation Trustees will also meet. All of these meetings are being held around the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association's Summer Meeting.

The Wisconsin growers welcome all interested producers to attend their event that includes an optional day of programming at Whispering Pines Tree Farm on Thursday, August 17. Friday kicks off the official event with scheduled presenters including Craig Regelbrugge with AmericanHort, Tim O'Connor with the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and National Christmas Tree Association, as well as a preview of the Promotion Board's 2017 campaign. Saturday is a tour of North COUNTRY Christmas and wraps with a Wisconsin-style "Beer and Brats Tailgate Party."

National Tree and Wreath Contest winners will be announced at the Friday evening banquet and the Grand Champion winner will have the honor of being considered to present a Christmas tree to the White House.

Provided by the National Christmas Tree Association <http://www.realchristmastrees.org>

National Christmas Tree Stops in Blacksburg, VA



The National Christmas Tree made its final stop in Blacksburg, VA on November 25. The 80' Engelmann spruce was cut in Little Ski Hill, Idaho. Payette National Forest workers used a traditional cross-cut saw, as a way of honoring the traditional logging skills and tools used in the region.

(left) Jane Graham, Dublin, VA, American Farm Publication Correspondent, interviews one of the National Forest Service staff, in Blacksburg, accompanying the tree on its 3,000 mile trip from Idaho to Washington, DC

Photos by Jeff Miller

Save the Date!
Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Annual Meeting and Conference
August 10-12, 2017
Wytheville Meeting Center
Are You Ready to Transition Your Business to the next Generation/ Owner?



One of multiple 4'x4' banners available from the Christmas Tree Promotion Board's (CTPB) marketing campaign. Download their catalog of marketing materials from <http://www.christmastreepromotionboard.org/2016-campaign/>

From the President



Good day everyone. I hope this message finds all of you in good health, well rested and ready for another successful year. By most accounts, both real and anecdotal, we have heard that many members enjoyed their most successful season in years. The VCTGA wants to help each of you continue with your success.

Elsewhere in this edition of the Journal you will find information regarding the 2017 VCTGA Annual Meeting. Vice President John Carroll has put together an excellent program for the meeting which we believe you will find interesting and useful in your everyday work. The dates are August 10-12 at the Wytheville Meeting Center. Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend. The Annual Meeting is a great time to meet other members and exchange ideas. We hope you will make every effort to attend.

I recently attended a meeting with representatives of the Virginia Farm Bureau, the State Fair of Virginia and

other commodity producers. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange ideas on how to improve attendance and traffic through the agriculture pavilion at the Fair. Different layouts were discussed as well as more signage and promotion. We are encouraged by these efforts as we believe the State Fair is an excellent showcase for our industry.

Speaking of the State Fair, please mark your calendars for this year's event: **September 29 through October 8**. VCTGA is always in need of volunteers to staff our exhibit and we hope you will consider participating later this year.

The VCTGA has once again applied for a specialty crop grant. The USDA has given approximately \$360,000 in total grant money to Virginia. The grants are managed by VDACS. Many thanks to Greg Lemmer for taking time to write the grant application. If approved, we will use the money for a number of different projects. We will redo our printed material and update our exhibit displays and web site to take advantage of the national marketing campaign being implemented by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board. We hope to know by early fall if our application is approved.

That's all for now. I hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal. As always if you have any questions or suggestions please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the Board to pass along your thoughts. Thank you.

*Jeff Gregson,
President VCTGA 2016-17*

IT'S CHRISTMAS.
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Coordinating Editors*

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*Mount Rogers Report
Jackie Davis, President, MRCTGA*

*Pathology & Disease
Norman Dart*

*Pests
Eric Day*

*VDACS Support & Updates
Danny Neel
Dave Robishaw*

*Marketing, Promotion,
& Social Media
Sue Bostic*

*Grant Updates
Greg Lemmer*

Editor in Chief - Jeff Miller

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Challenges of a Growing Market ...Can we meet the Demand?

VCTGA Annual Meeting & Conference



**Wytheville Meeting Center:
Wytheville, Virginia
August 10-12, 2017
Save the Date!**

This year was one of the best sales seasons for our industry in recent memory. With the new Check off program beginning to successfully promote our product and a very clear statement from millennials that they value the family tradition of purchasing a real tree, it appears that we are poised to have a very successful 10 or more years of record sales, price appreciation, and growth in our industry. We all knew this was coming, or at least we hoped so, but are we ready to meet this market?

Our annual meeting in Wytheville this summer will focus on meeting the future demands from our customers by addressing critical issues and opportunities in our industry. You will want to make plans to attend this meeting, August 10-12, 2017.

We'll be meeting in the beautiful Wytheville Meeting Center which is located right off Interstates 81 and 77. The program planning is nearly complete and will feature industry experts on current and future tree supply, tree establishment, new spe-

cies research, gains in value from genetic tree improvement, customer service trends and challenges, and transitioning our business to the next generation.

In addition, we'll have some fun with a Thursday evening outing to the Beagle Ridge Herb Farm; our new tradition, the Friday Awards Luncheon; and our lively scholarship auction featuring Auctioneer Danny Neal. We'll also have a group of loyal exhibitors on site that have been so supportive of our industry.

Combine all of this with a pre-conference pesticide certification class along with a concluding Christmas tree field tour on Saturday and you have the makings of one of our best meetings. If you want to remain relevant in our industry, you'll want to attend this meeting!

Details on our Program are listed below.

Pesticide Recertification – Thursday morning

Program Begins: 1:00 pm Thursday August 10

Industry Speakers: **Dr. Earl Deal**, *Smokey Holler Tree Farm*, and **James Rockis**, *Reliable Source and Current Chair of the Check off Board*.

University Speakers: **Dr. John Frampton**, *North Carolina State University*, **Dr. Vincent Magnini** and **Dr. Alex White**, *Virginia Tech*

Panels: Next Generation Christmas Tree Producers (from our Membership)

Pre-Conference Pesticide Certification: Kyle Peer and Eric Day, *Virginia Tech*

Tree and Wreath Contest: Set up Thursday 8:00 am-12:00 noon; Robert O'Keeffe

Christmas Tree Farm Field Tour: 9:00 am-1:00 pm Saturday August 12

*Provided by John Carroll,
VCTGA Vice President*

Shortages Looming? Be Prepared

By Tommy Naylor



The glut has been consumed. For years, we have had an ample supply of seedlings and transplants to continue our planting needs. However, this may be changing. Upon attending the winter meeting of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association, I learned of the potential of forthcoming shortages. Personally, I am not surprised because I have gotten a whiff of knowledge in a similar situation from the nursery and landscape industry.

There are perhaps three or four reasons why this may be occurring.

Hard Economic Times

For eight years, the economy tanked, sending plant sales to all-time lows and much plant material was destroyed due to a diminishing market. New construction in the housing industry dropped drastically and disposable income also dropped. Therefore, propagated plant material and seedlings were scrapped with little or no need to grow to a marketable plant. Since then, the markets are returning and better times are upon us. But some larger growers of plant material are apprehensive about getting back into the seedling/transplant market again due to the misfortune they had before.

Contaminated Seedlings

What I learned at the meeting seedlings may have pathogens that will

lead to an overall decline of the tree. In North Carolina, there are no white pine seedlings that can be purchased. What was available was spoken for months ago, and the effects of hurricane Matthew finished off any availability unspoken for. At the Linville River Nursery, the N.C. Forestry Service Division has unfortunately diseased white pine due to phytophthora and has no doubt affected the Fraser fir population as well. Thus, another blow for availability. Fortunately, the Virginia Department of Forestry had white pine availability as of early January, of this year. But where do other problems exist for an available source?

Seed Orchards?

There are numerous seed orchards for Fraser fir either by private owner or by state agencies such as the forestry service. However, as these age new orchards has to be planted to continue the seed source. Each orchard has its

own unique characteristic of Fraser fir due to perhaps the area of the mountain region the native species is indigenous to. Some areas of western NC and southwestern Virginia will feature differences in the tree such as a deeper green color or the growing habit (narrow or broad growth).



When referring to other species, what about white pine? Where are the known white pine orchards to collect these seeds? In North Carolina for years, a reliable seed orchard existed in Morganton, in the foothills. However, the city decided not to renew the lease to the state and now a city park

exists where we once relied on a good seed source. Instead, seeds were planted at the Claridge State Nursery in Goldsboro, NC, in the east. Not a good solution. The coastal plain climate is not conducive to good quality seedlings and this is what happened. The plants were trashy, forked and not the straight pencil thickness stem that makes for a good 2-0 seedling. And worst of all the nursery was flooded last October, thus contaminating everything growing there including what white pine they had. Nowhere in the state exists a known white pine seed orchard whether it is in the western piedmont or in the mountain region. Most nurseries in Pennsylvania and Michigan have their own seed orchards or has access to orchards within these states to collect different seed species. The seed source is also stated for many Fraser fir and pine sources. They may read NC source, Mt. Rogers or Roan Mountain. These are both state and



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Wholesale Price List for Quality Seedlings & Transplants

Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate	Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate	Age	Size	Per 100 Rate	Per 1,000 Rate
FRASER FIR				WHITE SPRUCE - Lake States				WHITE PINE - Lake States			
(2-2, PL+2)	8-15"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(2-0, 3-0)	9-15"	\$40.00	\$175.00	(2-0, 3-0)	6-14"	\$45.00	\$225.00
(3-2, PL+2)	10-18"	\$115.00	\$775.00	(2-1, 2-2)	15-20"	\$90.00	\$595.00	(2-1)	8-14"	\$82.00	\$550.00
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$125.00	\$850.00	(2-2)	15-24"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(2-2)	12-18"	\$110.00	\$750.00
BALSAM FIR				NORWAY SPRUCE - Lake States				SCOTCH PINE - Scotchland + French			
(P+1)	8-14"	\$86.00	\$575.00	(2-0, 3-0)	9-15"	\$40.00	\$175.00	(2-0)	6-12"	\$35.00	\$165.00
(P+2)	10-18"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(2-1, 2-2)	15-24"	\$90.00	\$650.00	(2-0, 3-0)	9-15"	\$40.00	\$175.00
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$115.00	\$795.00	(2-2)	15-24"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(X-LG)	18-24"	\$250.00	XXX
CANAAN FIR				BLACKHILL SPRUCE				WHITE CEDAR			
(P+1)	8-14"	\$90.00	\$595.00	(2-0)	5-12"	\$40.00	\$175.00	(2-0)	4-8"	\$40.00	\$195.00
(P+2)	10-18"	\$115.00	\$795.00	(2-1)	6-12"	\$75.00	\$495.00	(3-0)	8-15"	\$60.00	\$295.00
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$125.00	\$850.00	(2-2)	12-18"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(2-1)	8-15"	\$82.00	\$550.00
DOUGLAS FIR - Lincoln				SERBIAN SPRUCE				ARBORVITAE - DARK GREEN, TECHNY, EMERALD & GREEN GIANT			
(2-0, 3-0)	9-15"	\$40.00	\$175.00	(2-0)	8-14"	\$45.00	\$225.00	(RC+1)	6-12"	\$125.00	\$850.00
(2-1)	12-18"	\$86.00	\$575.00	(2-1, P+1)	8-15"	\$90.00	\$595.00	(RC+2)	12-18"	\$165.00	\$1,100.00
CONCOLOR FIR				AUSTRIAN PINE							
(2-0)	5-12"	\$45.00	\$225.00	(2-0)	6-12"	\$40.00	\$175.00	Discount on orders over 10,000 plants			
(2-1, P+1)	8-14"	\$90.00	\$595.00					For complete list please write or call us.			
(2-2, P+2)	10-18"	\$115.00	\$795.00	RED PINE - Lake States				Brian Bosch / Owner			
COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE - San Juan & Kiabab				(2-0, 3-0)				6-14"			
(2-0, 3-0)	9-15"	\$40.00	\$175.00	(2-1, 2-2)				\$45.00			
(2-1, 2-2)	10-16"	\$82.00	\$550.00	(2-2, P+2)				\$225.00			
(2-2, P+2)	10-18"	\$110.00	\$750.00	(P+2, P+3)				\$115.00			
(P+2, P+3)	12-22"	\$115.00	\$795.00								

private sources which these nursery-men collect the seed.

Land Availability

Development is consuming land faster than ever. What was once a pristine, open farmland is now subdivision or commercial property. Where can a reliable seed source be planted to offset the effects of development? It seems remote locations away from growing urban areas may be the best answer or on government property such as a state or national forest. Shortages are sure to occur if development continues at the pace its going.

Alternatives?

What is the potential of other seedling sources for availability? The efforts of micro propagation or tissue culture provides great potential as an alternative. Instead of seed cone production a petri dish in a lab can produce a new plant grown under a clean and enclosed environment. At our state universities, research is ongoing with Fraser fir and other spruce and pine species to develop micro propagated material. This has been successfully done with loblolly pine for eventual field planting for timber production. Another thing I learned is some local Christmas tree growers are also beginning to produce their own seedlings and will no doubt be a source for others to buy.

Looking Ahead

If this past Christmas tree selling season was an indication as to the phenomenal sales that occurred, we as growers need a reliable seed/ seedling/transplant source to continue planting one to three trees for every one that is cut. Good reliable seed orchards, private ownership of seedling production and possibly micro propagated material to be available will insure a plentiful seedling source for some time. We have seen these gluts in the past but with careful planning,

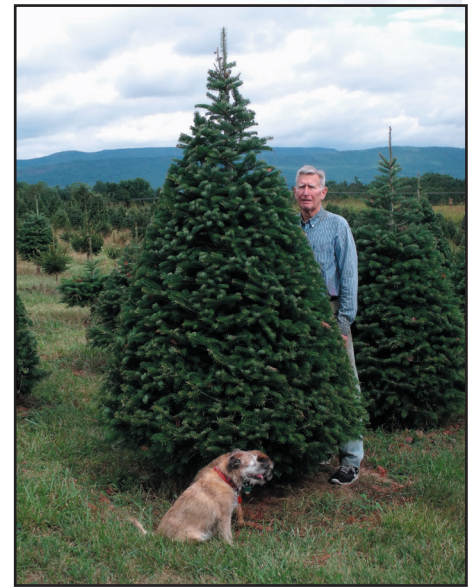
sowing seed now and not all at once will carry us through to avoid future gluts and then only to see a lack of supply later.

Clean, disease free plant material will give us better survivability and fewer mortal situations. I plan to use fungicides to dip the roots and foliage to hopefully kill off any existing pathogens when the plants arrive. To avoid shortages, it is hopeful that efforts can be made to avoid over planting, that could produce a glut, have reliable seed orchards and the use of clean or fumigated material at planting time. With these practices, I believe we can overcome shortages whether it be good or adverse economic times.

Provided by Tommy Naylor, North Lake Christmas Tree & Nursery, Benson, NC & VCTGA Director tenaylor07@em-barqmail.com

No Fertilizer for 16 Years and Soil Nutrient Levels are Unchanged

By Steve Rhoades



This is a dirty story, but it needs to be told. The purpose of the story is to examine the proposition that growing Christmas trees will significantly reduce the nutrient content of the soil over time. If so, it would presumably be necessary to add nutrients periodically with some kind of fertilizer to maintain an adequate level of nutrients for growing healthy, attractive trees. The impetus for the story stems from a couple of comments I received about earlier articles of mine on fertilizing trees that appeared in the VCTGA newsletter. It is useful to provide a little background to put this article in context. In the earlier articles, I looked at established knowledge in horticulture and soil science, discussed some systematic studies of fertilizing trees, and described my own experiments. As I reported, the established knowledge indicates that trees take up relative little nutrients compared to field crops, and natural forces continually add nutrients to the soil. About a half-dozen studies I read found that fertilizing Christmas trees with nitrogen generally had little beneficial effect,

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Will there be an Adequate Supply of Trees for the Future?
Dr. Earl Deal, Smokey Holler Tree Farm, has some insights

although some studies found an improvement in color. Several experiments that I conducted on my trees involved using various kinds of fertilizer around some trees but not others. I conducted this kind of experiment several times on both firs and spruces, and not once did I observe a beneficial effect on the fertilized trees relative to the unfertilized trees. As a result of all of this, I have never

fertilized my trees except for the few used in the experiments.

Knowing that I was a comparatively new grower, a couple of more-experienced growers suggested that after a rotation or two, I may find it necessary or beneficial to fertilize my fields in order to restore nutrients removed by the trees I grew. That argument seemed logical to me, but it needed to be weighed against the

facts that 1) trees are slow users of nutrients, and 2) nutrients are added to the soil by natural forces, which may be adequate to maintain good soil for my trees. So, after growing trees in my fields for up to 16 years, it seemed like a reasonable amount of time had passed to compare my soil nutrient levels from the time of the initial planting to 2017. The soil tests covered about one-half of my tree fields.

Findings

Results of the soil nutrient comparisons are presented in the table below. The soil tests were conducted by the Virginia Tech Soil Testing Laboratory. I dug the soil samples following the procedure recommended on the sample box. I did, however, dig more samples of soil from each field than recommended to ensure an accurate representation of soil nutrients. Most of the fields were roughly one acre in size. The nutrient abbreviations in the table are defined as follows: P=phosphorus, K=potassium, Ca=calcium, and Mg=magnesium. Other abbreviations are as follows: pH=soil acidity, VH=very high, H=high (meaning plants usually do not respond to fertilizer), M=medium (meaning plants sometimes respond to fertilizer). The various micro-nutrients were all rated as “sufficient” in the soil report I received, so they are not reported here.

Field	Test Year	Nutrient Rating				Soil pH	Tree Species
		P	K	Ca	Mg		
1U	2001	H	H-	VH	VH	6.5	spruce, pine
	2017	M	H-	H+	H	5.9	spruce, pine
1L	2001	H	H-	VH	H+	6.6	Canaan fir, spruce
	2017	H-	VH	VH	VH	6.6	Canaan fir, spruce
7U	2007	M	H	VH	VH	6.4	spruce
	2017	M-	H	H-	H	6.0	spruce
7L	2007	M-	H-	H-	H+	5.9	spruce
	2017	H-	H	VH	VH	6.6	spruce
4U	2003	H	H	H	H+	6.8	Douglas fir, cypress
	2017	H	VH	H+	H+	6.5	Douglas fir, cypress
6	2004	H-	M	M+	H-	5.8	pine
	2017	H-	VH	H-	H	6.1	pine

As you can see in the table, the results are for six different fields in which trees have been growing continuously for as long as 16 years (2001-2017) and as few as 10 years (2007-2017). So, all of the fields have gone through at least one full rotation of trees and some have gone through two, or nearly two, rotations. The nutrient ratings have remained remarkably stable over the 10-16 years spanned. There have been some instances of variation in ratings in each of the six fields, but the variation has been trivial. For example, in field 1L, P fell from H to H-, K rose from H- to VH, and in field 4U, Ca rose from H to H+. Not only were the changes generally very small, but sometimes they went up and other times down. Larger variations in soil nutrients were rare, occurring only three times out of the 24 pairs of test results; specifically, in field 1U, P fell from H to M from 2001-2017, in field 7L, P rose from M- to H-, and in field 6, K rose from M to VH.

The column in the table that shows soil pH reveals that pH levels remained fairly stable over time, remaining in the slightly-to-moderately acidic range. (Recall that a pH of 7.0 is neutral and below that soil is increasingly acid.) Although most of the fields have a pH level somewhat higher than the suggested optimal level for growing most Christmas tree species, the levels are well within the range that allows the soil nutrients to be utilized by the trees. Finally, the last column in the table shows the species of trees grown in each field. As you can see, that includes firs, spruces, Douglas firs, pines, and cypresses. Regardless of the tree species, pH and nutrient levels remained highly stable over the 10 to 16 years that trees were growing in these fields.

Discussion

The main conclusion from the soil test results presented in this table is that in the six fields I examined, growing Christmas trees did not reduce the nutrient levels in the soil. This suggests that natural factors restored nutrients to the soil at more or less the same rate as they were being taken out of the soil as the trees grew. These factors would include the decay of organic matter such as old tree roots and stumps, along with grass and weed cuttings. In addition to these more obvious sources of nutrients, countless numbers of earthworms, micro-organisms, nematodes, and fungi aided in the process, as did mineralization. Even the many birds I see roosting and nesting in my trees and the ubiquitous rabbit droppings make at least a minor contribution to the soil nutrients. In any event, whatever was going on down in the dirt, apparently was sufficient to maintain the fertility of the soil in my fields.

Clearly my tree growing practices play some role in both the loss and retention of soil nutrients. I suspect

that, for the most part, my growing practices are similar to many other growers, especially on choose-and-cut farms. I use 7'x8' spacing, which allows about one-half the number of trees on a given field than would 5'x6' spacing and thereby presumably requires one-half the nutrients. Grasses and weeds are allowed to grow in both aisles and cross-aisles keeping the soil full of all kinds of roots thereby helping to provide a healthy habitat for the earthworms and micro-organisms that do so much good for the soil and helping break up my relatively heavy soil. Obviously, I must mow in both directions, aisles and cross-aisles, leaving abundant cuttings to decay and return nutrients to the soil. I plant beside old stumps leaving them and their roots to rot in the ground. Finally, because of the relatively high nutrient content of my fields, I do not apply any fertilizer, thereby avoiding interfering with the natural processes of nutrient regeneration.

There is one critical nutrient that wasn't shown in the table, because it can't be evaluated by a soil analysis but must be measured by a foliar analysis. That nutrient is nitrogen. Because I do not get a nitrogen rating from the Soil Test Lab, I have conducted several different experiments with the application of nitrogen around samples of my trees. I reported on those experiments in several earlier issues of the VCTGA newsletter. Without exception, the application of nitrogen had no apparent effect on my trees. So, it appears that even in connection with nitrogen, which moves through the soil relatively fast, natural factors, such as those described above, have maintained adequate levels of nitrogen in my soil to grow healthy, attractive Christmas trees (in my biased opinion).

The soil in all of my fields is technically a silt/loam, but there seems to

be considerable variation, with some areas having more silt and clay than might be preferred. In general, it is relatively heavy soil that has the virtue of holding nutrients relatively well, but in some areas has the drawback of holding too much water, which impedes air from getting to the tree roots.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have grown Christmas trees of various species in my fields for 16 years, going through up to two full rotations. During this period, I have not applied fertilizer of any kind to my tree fields. Soil tests results presented in this article indicate that the trees have not degraded the nutrient content of my soil. Similarly, numerous experiments I conducted involving fertilizing with nitrogen indicate that nitrogen content has not been degraded. It certainly appears to me that the natural forces creating soil nutrients have kept up with the relatively slow rate of nutrient removal by trees. I am, of course, fortunate to have soil with relatively high levels of nutrients to begin with.

If any of your fields have relatively heavy soil with fairly high nutrient content, it might pay you to experiment with going fertilizer-free. For 16 years, I have gone fertilizer-free and put the cost of fertilizer and the cost for application of the fertilizer in my pocket rather than someone else's. It may not work for you, but if your soil conditions and growing practices are similar to mine, I don't know why it would not. I should add that I do get satisfaction from knowing that I am not disrupting, and am actually encouraging, the complex natural factors that are at work in my dirt. There is a lot of good stuff going on down there—eating and excreting, decaying, aeration, mineralization, and symbiotic relationships between fungi and roots. This is a dirty story with a happy ending!

If you have not had your soil tested before, you can be assured that the process is easy. Go to the VA Cooperative Extension Service office in your county and pick up a soil sample box and information form for each field that you want tested. Simply follow instructions for filling out the form, digging soil samples, and mailing your boxes to the VA Tech Soil Testing Laboratory. There is no charge for soil tests conducted for a commercial operation. I should offer a cautionary note that the soil test results you receive will almost always include a recommendation that you apply nutrients to your field. Even if a test result for a particular nutrient is High (H), application of fertilizer with that nutrient is recommended. Only when a nutrient level is rated Very High (VH) will fertilizer not be recommended. I have not followed these fertilizer recommendations for various reasons explained in this article; particularly the science/textbook

explanations of 1) the relatively slow nutrient uptake of trees and 2) the natural regeneration of soil nutrients.

And now, at the practical level, soil test comparisons presented in this article, along with my nitrogen experiments, have shown that the nutrient levels in my soil have not been degraded by growing Christmas trees for up to 16 years. Beyond the basic science, data, and experiments discussed in this article, one might resort to the old saying, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." Or, in this case, "The proof of the soil nutrients is in the trees." As I mentioned earlier, my trees appear to be healthy and attractive.

The sharp divergence between the Cooperative Extension Service's recommendations for applying fertilizer in almost all soil-rating circumstances and my apparently successful experience with not applying any fertilizer warrants a

possible explanation. The divergence may be due to an assumption by the Extension Service that Christmas tree growers generally use tighter tree spacing than I do. As noted above, if a grower uses 5'x6' spacing, there would be nearly twice as many trees, requiring twice as much nutrients in a given field than in my fields with 7'x8' spacing. I suspect that 7'x8' spacing is more typical of choose-and-cut growers, while 5'x6', or even 5'x5', spacing is more common among wholesale growers.

Another possible explanation is that the Extension Service may assume that a lot of the trees in a field will be grown to quite a large size, say 15', and such large trees presumably would take up a lot more nutrients from a field in their later years than more standard-size trees. If either of these possible explanations for the stark divergence between the Exten-

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sion Service fertilizer recommendations and my successful fertilizer-free experience to date make sense, perhaps it would be useful for the Cooperative Extension Service and Soil Testing Laboratory to know your tree spacing and ultimate size in coming up with fertilizer recommendations.

*By Steve Rhoades,
Mountain View Farm, Edinburg, VA
steve21@shentel.net*

Questions for Members

As a follow-up to the article Steve Rhoades wrote in the Winter issue of the VCTGA News Journal, page 4, he asked several questions for other VCTGA members to respond with their experiences.

Below is a response from
Tim Williams, Spruce Rock Farm,
Brightwood, VA,

I read your article with great interest inasmuch as I believe that we both started our tree farms at about the same time (1999?). I thought I'd share our experiences:

1. Scotch Pines.

We planted French Highland Scotch Pines in hopes that their blue green color would appeal to the "baby boomer" and older market. The sales volume has not justified the effort or cost although we get inquiries from some of our millennial customers. We are getting increasing inquiries about Red Cedars.

We too have had problems with saw flies plus trees growing lateral branches too thick to remove dead needles. The trees prefer to grow into a ball making shearing a "pain". Forget about getting them through a 23" baler.

Worst of all, they develop a gall disease that can't be cured and carry other diseases that can infect other

trees. We stopped planting or offering them last year and are cutting down the remaining ones or using them for wreath tips.

2. Parking.

We too have experienced parking overflow.

Fortunately, we planned 40-50' alley ways adjacent to our current parking lot so that the car overflow has a place to go. We are strategically planning a network of large alley ways in new fields and are considering some type of shuttle operation in the future. We have not yet worked out the logistics, costs and liability issues associated with this approach.

3. White Spruce and Norways.

We offer both since our customers are varied in their desire for bluish and dark green trees.

4. Tipping.

We neither encourage or discourage tipping.

If tips are offered, we will graciously accept them especially if the customer is insistent.

5. Social Media.

We have our own website and Facebook page where we post information and announcements (blogs etc.). We do not engage in the response process due to the time commitment. Since we are nowhere near your sales volume, increasing sales through social media still makes sense for us. An increasing percentage of our customers are "millennials" who visit the farm with three generations of family. Their Facebook "shares" with their friends seems to be very beneficial to us.

*Tim Williams, Spruce Rock Farm,
Brightwood, Virginia 22715
540 543 2309, TimothyWil@msn.com*

Managing Vegetation for Optimum Survival and Growth

By John Carroll

I am writing this as a follow up to an article that appeared in the 2012 Summer issue entitled "Try a Rye Cover Crop with Your Next Christmas Tree Planting". In that article, I reported on a planting we had done at Claybrooke Farm in the fall of 2011. The field had been in row crops and we were converting it to pasture for livestock. Our farmer drilled rye, white clover and fescue into the corn stubble when he finished with the field after the corn harvest. The pasture project did not work out so we planted the field in Canaan fir and a few White pine later that fall.

Now, five years later we have learned some valuable lessons about what conditions provide the best environment for survival, growth, heat tolerance, and soil temperature abatement. Much of this information is standard practice for Fraser fir production in the mountains but can be applied in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain of Virginia and other states.



The rye cover shown in the 2012 photos provided shade for the entire summer, did not compete with the trees, and was mowed in early fall. The rye worked so well it actually smothered out some of the less desirable annual weeds like horse-

weed and lambs quarter. The resulting stand was mostly white clover that provided excellent cover for the next several years. We made a couple of applications of glyphosate each year for the next 5 years eliminating the fescue and maintaining a beautiful crop of clover. Clover is tolerant to glyphosate, especially at low rates, but as you would guess other vegetation made its way into the plantation like morning glories, crab grass, foxtail, annual weeds, poke berry, blackberry, hardwoods, and of course our favorite, poison ivy. It took some selective use of herbicides to help control the morning glories, poke, blackberry, hardwoods, and poison ivy but some of the other volunteer vegetation was beneficial. As the clover slowed down with the hot dry weather of summer the foxtail, crabgrass, and other annuals were welcome shade for the young trees and helped keep the soil temperatures lower. These plants germinate later and do not usually compete with the trees during that early initial survival period. The clover provides a triple benefit of keeping the soil temperatures lower, holding moisture, and providing beneficial nitrogen for the trees. Fescue is not welcome in our fields anymore, even as a corridor between the rows.



This plantation is now 5 years old, mostly 5-6' Canaan fir and White pine. With an initial survival of 90%+ we will be ready to start harvesting it in 2018. A recent photo shows the field in nearly the same location as the 2012 photo. Tree size is very uniform and impressive for its age. The

white clover is fading from the plantation due to our failure to maintain the PH and nutrients at a level that is conducive to clover production. We applied lime in pelletized form this spring along with a custom blended 12-30-20 fertilizer; the first application in this field since 2011 when the trees were planted. We have plans to do some experimental grazing with sheep in a small area of this field next summer, a practice used on some European Christmas tree farms. I may end up sleeping there to keep an eye on the trees!

Our normal method in replanting a field is to get all of the trees off and then apply bulk lime and nutrients as prescribed by a soil test.

This makes establishing the cover crop and white clover much easier. We have been doing this for several years but you can get behind in your planting unless you have unlimited land. Since our customer base is growing faster than our supply of trees, we experimented this spring by replanting a field that had about 10-15% of the mature trees left. We could not establish our normal rye cover on the field due to the 300 or so mature trees in the field so we decided to let the annual weeds provide that initial shade for the small trees. The PH was adequate so we applied fertilizer at the recommended rate and planted Canaan fir by the stumps on about 3 acres in early March. We had fescue corridors between the rows of mature trees so we sprayed the entire field with glyphosate in late April to eliminate competition from the newly planted trees. We managed the cover by bush hogging once in early summer and then let the weeds grow until mid-September when we made another application of glyphosate to clean up the field and followed up by bush hogging one last time. This would work for most farms that plant by the stump. It doesn't look particularly good but the trees are better off, soil temps are lower, and

the weeds provide good shade when the trees really need it. If you wanted to establish a white clover ground cover the following fall or winter you would need to make sure the PH was between 6.0-6.5, have or apply the proper nutrients for the clover, and find an effective way to establish the clover. We like to use Duran ladino clover and frost seed in February at a rate of 5-8 pounds per acre. Getting it on just prior to a snow is ideal using pelletized lime as a carrier and either a hand crank seeder or a tractor mounted spreader. This sounds pretty simple but actually it's quite a bit of work up front but a time and tree saver in the long run.

In my opinion, a lot of seedlings and transplants die because of too much "love" when they are first established. Planting on bare ground and maintaining a weed free environment throughout the growing season (without having irrigation) will cost several percentage points in survival during a normal year and spell disaster in a drought situation. I really prefer using the "good" weeds and clover to provide the optimum growing conditions for our trees. Our family is not unanimous on this management technique due to its unsightly appearance during most of the summer and the fall bush hogging that provides an unpleasant ride on the tractor. Perhaps if you want the real scoop on this management tool before you try it you should contact our tractor operator and farm host, Virginia!

By John Carroll, Claybrooke Farm, Louisa, VA claybrookefarm@gmail.com



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Spruce

Species	Size	Age	Per 100	Per 1000
Colorado Bl. Spruce	9-15"	2-0	\$38	\$200
<i>Picea pungens 'glauca'</i>	10-18"	2-1	\$86	\$535
Kaibab, San Juan	14-20"	2-2	\$122	\$765
Misty Blue *	18-24"	2-2	\$152	\$950
* - Add \$75/1000				

White Spruce	10-18"	2-0	\$38	\$200
<i>Picea glauca</i>	14-20"	2-2	\$105	\$660
Lake States	20-30"	2-2	\$136	\$850

Norway Spruce	10-18"	2-0	\$39	\$205
<i>Picea abies</i>	10-16"	2-2	\$88	\$550
Lake States	14-18"	2-1	\$85	\$530
	16-24"	2-2	\$124	\$775

Black Hills Spruce	8-16"	2-2	\$88	\$550
<i>Picea glauca 'densata'</i>	10-18"	2-3	\$104	\$650
Black Hills, SD				

Serbian Spruce	10-16"	2-1	\$92	\$575
<i>Picea omorika</i>	18-24"	2-2	\$140	\$875
Germany				

Fir

Fraser Fir	8-12"	P+2	\$102	\$640
<i>Abies fraseri</i>	10-16"	P+2	\$114	\$710
Roan Mountain				

Balsam Fir	6-12"	P+1	\$94	\$590
<i>Abies balsamea</i>	8-12"	P+2	\$104	\$650
Nova Scotia	12-16"	P+2	\$128	\$800

Concolor Fir	5-10"	2-0	\$42	\$220
<i>Abies concolor</i>	6-9"	2-1	\$88	\$550
San Isabel, Carson, Cibola	10-18"	2-2	\$124	\$775

Canaan Fir	8-14"	P+1	\$110	\$685
<i>Abies balsamea var. phanerolipsis</i>	10-16"	P+2	\$124	\$775
West Virginia	18-24"	P+3	\$160	\$1,000

Douglas Fir:	10-18"	2-0	\$37	\$195
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii glauca</i>	12-16"	2-1	\$84	\$525
Lincoln, Rio Grande	20-30"	2-2	\$124	\$775

Korean Fir:	7-12"	P+2	\$112	\$700
<i>Abies koreana</i>				

Pine, Other Evergreens

Species	Size	Age	Per 100	Per 1000
White Pine	4-8"	2-0	\$31	\$160
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	8-12"	2-0	\$43	\$225
Lake States	8-14"	2-1	\$84	\$525
	12-18"	2-2	\$112	\$700

Red Pine	4-7"	2-0	\$27	\$140
<i>Pinus resinosa</i>	7-12"	2-1	\$90	\$560
Lake States	8-14"	2-2	\$112	\$700
	14-20"	2-3	\$144	\$900

Austrian Pine	8-12"	2-0	\$37	\$195
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Scotch Pine	6-10"	2-0	\$27	\$140
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	10-18"	2-0	\$36	\$190
Scots Highland, Guadarrama, French, Macedonia, East Anglia				

Ponderosa Pine	6-9"	2-0	\$45	\$235
<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	5-10"	2-1	\$84	\$525
Black Hills N.F.	8-14"	2-2	\$108	\$675

American Larch	12-18"	2-0	\$80	\$500
<i>Larix laricina</i>	18-30"	2-0	\$98	\$610
Ontario	30-42"	2-0	\$128	\$800

Canadian Hemlock	8-14"	P+1	\$101	\$630
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	12-18"	P+2	\$118	\$740
Ontario	18-24"	P+2	\$140	\$875

White Cedar	4-8"	2-0	\$34	\$180
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	8-15"	2-0, 3-0	\$46	\$240
Minnesota	10-16"	3-1	\$98	\$610

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Jeff Busscher, Manager

Profile of a Christmas Tree Grower – 27 Years Ago

*by Bernard S. Douglass
Reprinted from VCTGA 1990*

Christmas tree growers are very special people. Although they are all different as individuals, they seem to share certain characteristics that set them apart from an average cross section of humanity in general.

One trait that comes to mind is fierce independence and rugged individualism. Most growers had to pull themselves up by their boot straps. They put their labor, faith, imagination, and hard-earned money on a high-risk enterprise. Small wonder that they waste little sympathy on able-bodied adults who turn down work on their tree farms in favor of receiving un-earned welfare benefits.

Another characteristic in common is willingness to gamble and assume risks. How many run-of-the-mill people would bet on a crop that won't produce a dime's profit for 6 or 7 years? Even then, they can only hope and pray that they planted the right species and seed source to make their future buyers happy. And who knows how competitive the market will be in the distant future when the trees are ready to sell?

A third common trait is a love for nature and appreciation of how trees grow and respond to TLC. It is surely more than mere coincidence that so many growers dabble in flowers, vegetable gardens, and other horticulture hobbies. Growers sometimes bristle at the excesses of so-called environmentalists who would ban all herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides that help keep their trees living and healthy. Yet, these same growers are among the most effective environmentalists in the country. They protect their soil to prevent erosion and filling streams with silt.

They create beautiful greenery in fields that would otherwise be bare, unsightly, and unproductive. They create havens for wildlife. They produce a renewable crop that spreads joy and seasonal happiness to the consumer. Christmas tree growers are, indeed, true environmentalists!

Another trait that comes to mind is sunny dispositions. Most Christmas tree growers are naturally happy people. They enjoy the fun of travel, meetings, field tours, and social functions. But they also enjoy solitude and meditation while walking in their trees. The liquid call of the meadowlark, drumming of a ruffed grouse, or sight of a soaring hawk makes them realize and appreciate how close and harmoniously that they are working with nature.

And finally, Christmas tree people share the lot of being very fortunate people. What a rare privilege it is to be able to earn or supplement a living while having the time of your life!

*Provided by Paris Rasnic, Moose Apple
Christmas Tree Farm, Berryville, &
VCTGA Director*

Recycling Evergreens Helps Improve Fishing – 30 Years Ago

*by Brodie McDowell
Reprinted from Greensboro News &
Record (1987)*

Evergreens that have been brightly lit and highly decorated for the Christmas season will be seen on streets in front of many homes during the next several days as they await pickup by the trash collectors.

There isn't much demand for a used Christmas tree, and not too many people think of recycling these evergreens. Not all of these trees wind up in the garbage dump or being burned by an individual. Some will be recycled by fishermen who

will take the time to collect the trees, weight them, and place them in the deep water of their favorite fishing waters in an effort to hide the little fish from the game fish, and the game fish in turn work their way into the area in an effort to feed on the little fish.

Planting these trees in waters after Christmas pays off in southern waters in just a short time. Anglers putting out the trees in the next few days expect to find fish in them in the spring. It happens in most cases, but not always.

Bass fishermen are notorious for putting out trees in such bigger waters as Kerr Lake, Lake Norman, and along the Yadkin chain of High Rock, Tillery and Tuckertown. **They reason that these fish attractors bring in the smaller fish and the bass follow them, giving the angler a better chance to catch fish.**

Those who fish for crappies have known for years that they can shorten the time between bites by putting out Christmas trees around piers and boat docks. Some of these fishing fanatics sweeten the pot by filling bags with rotten vegetables as a secondary inducement to the crappies.

Creating "fish hides" can be done on almost any body of water, even farm ponds and small lakes and impoundments. It is important in many cases that such attractors or other man-made attractors be placed in the waters to provide structure for fish.

Guilford Wildlife Club members lost no time in getting started on recycling trees that a few nights ago were in dens or living rooms of Guilford County homes. Member Ray Marley worked with club president Larry Shanks in putting out the first tree, locating it in fairly deep water near an area that could be reached by anglers casting from a pier. A couple of other trees were readied for putting out, but

will have to wait until other members bring out concrete blocks to be used to anchor the trees.

We're going to put out some more trees pretty soon, Shanks said. "One of our members is going to do most of it. We're going to have to be pretty careful because the lake is going to be dropped about seven feet in order to cover some pipes on the upper end."

Marley and Shanks used a chain saw to cut two trees that were deemed too tall for suitable shelters. They could find just one concrete block on club property on this day, so they used it to weight down the fattest, shortest trees available.

Greensboro's Eddie Land has been known to stop his pickup truck to pick up discarded trees as he rides around town after Christmas. Land, a brick contractor, stockpiles these trees on a vacant lot until he gets a sufficient number to take to Kerr Lake.

Professionals who fish bass tournaments will go to great lengths to improve the structure of their waters. The Christmas tree plays a part in this. At other times, even larger trees are brought into play. Junior Collis of Atlanta in the early 1970s was known to cut down big trees, then drag them by boat to an area where they were weighted.

These pros go to great lengths to hide their fishing spots from others. Some of them don't put out markers of any kind, others use very small bobbers as markers, putting the bobber in the general area, but not directly over the structure.

In some cases, anglers who come across these markers move them 50 to 100 feet in another direction after locating the structure.

The evergreen is a symbol of the Christmas season. But the recycling of this tree can make your fishing days more enjoyable next spring and

summer. Taking the time now to gather a few trees and putting them in your favorite fishing waters will pay dividends. This is recycling at its best.

Provided by Paris Rasnic, Moose Apple Christmas Tree Farm, Berryville, & VCTGA Director

Beneficial of the Week - Pollinators

By: Paula Shrewsbury, University of Maryland

Planting time is upon us.... Don't forget to provide food resources for pollinators and natural enemies!

Plants provide resources in the form of nectar and pollen for beneficial insects such as pollinators and omnivorous natural enemies. Many beneficial insects are in decline and their overall diversity and abundance are at risk. One of the simpler ways to mitigate ongoing declines in beneficial insects is to provide floral resources (nectar and pollen) from plants that are attractive and nutritional to these insects. Green industry professionals and the public in general should know which plants provide resources that help to conserve beneficial insects. Green industry professionals can gain from his knowledge in multiple ways. First, trees, shrubs, and flowering plants can be marketed for their added benefit of supporting beneficial insects. Secondly, you can be stewards of the environment by recommending and installing plants and / or designing landscapes that favor pollinators and/ or natural enemies. Conservation practices also help to retain ecosystem services provided by insects such as pollination and biological control. "Natural" biological control helps reduce pest outbreaks and reduces costs (less pesticides are needed) associated with the management of landscapes and nurseries.

One thing to remember is that not all plants are created equal in the nutritional value of their nectar and pollen. Over the past dozen or so years numerous research studies have been conducted evaluating the attractiveness and nutritional value of woody and herbaceous ornamental plants to pollinators and natural enemies. There are several good research-based resources as to which plants are best at conserving pollinators and/ or natural enemies. At the end of this article I provide a list of these resources and their web links. I am sure this is not an inclusive list but to date these are the sources I have found to be useful.

In addition to choosing the appropriate plants for conserving pollinators and natural enemies, there are several other factors to consider. For example, plants should be selected so at least a few plants are in bloom throughout the entire season. Most challenging are plants that bloom very early in the season (some trees fulfill this niche) or very late. Flowers should vary in their floral architecture since big flowers (Composites) will attract different insects than small flowers (ex. *Umbelliferae*). Diversity is good!

Since lack of optimal floral resources are one of several factors that influence pollinator and natural enemy health, also keep in mind other measures to reduce detrimental impacts on beneficials. Practicing IPM and implementing management tactics other than pesticides, or selecting pesticides that have been shown through research to have less detrimental impact on beneficials is all part of the "strategy" to protect pollinators, natural enemies, and biodiversity overall.

Resources on flowering trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that have been shown through research to provide

optimal floral resources for pollinators and/or natural enemies (note this is not an inclusive list):

The Xerces Society: Conservation of diverse arthropods (ex. pollinators, monarch butterflies, natural enemies) <http://www.xerces.org/>

Xerces Society – List of Pollinator-Friendly Plants – Mid-Atlantic Region at: <http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/plant-lists/>

Multistate bulletin on Protecting and enhancing pollinators in urban landscapes for the U.S. North Central Region

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/how_to_protect_and_increase_pollinators_in_your_landscape

Native plants attractive to natural enemies and pollinators (Michigan State University) <http://nativeplants.msu.edu/> and <http://nativeplants.msu.edu/resources/publications>

A research-based list of flowering woody landscape plants that are attractive to bees: <http://www.floral-daily.com/article/9082/US-HRI-publishes-bee-friendly-plant-lists>

To access the list, click on the www.GrowWise.org/ChallengeToolkit, or go directly to list at: <http://grow-wise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/HRI-Pollinator-BeePlantLists-February2017.pdf>

Save the Date!

Virginia Christmas Tree Growers Annual Meeting and Conference

August 10-12, 2017

Tree & Wreath Contest, Are You In?

Pest Predictive Calendar - Landscape/Nursery

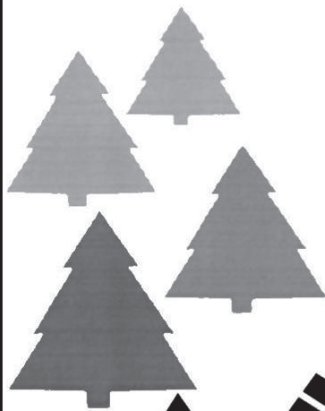
Mother Nature's Pest Alert Signals!

The Pest Predictive Calendar is a monitoring tool to assist in predicting when susceptible life stage(s) (stage you want to target for control measures) of pest insects are active by using plant phenological indicators (PPI) and growing degree days (GDD).

This tool will lead to improved timing of management tactics and more effective pest management.

<http://extension.umd.edu/ipm/pest-predictive-calendar-landscape-nursery>

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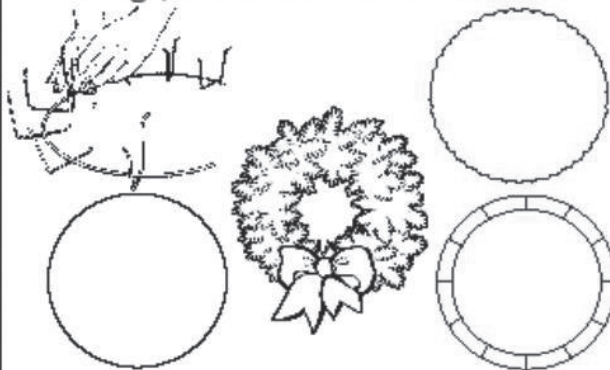
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New Gypsy Moth Quarantine in Wythe County



male(left) and female (right) Asian gypsy moths - shown for comparison -photo credit: USDA APHIS PPQ, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) has expanded the Virginia Gypsy Moth Quarantine (2VAC5-330) to include the county of Wythe. This action became necessary after surveys indicated an increase in gypsy moth populations in Wythe County. Once established, the gypsy moth has the potential to spread to uninfested areas, either through natural means or through the artificial movement of infested articles. The quarantine is intended to prevent the artificial spread of this pest. Under the terms of the quarantine, trees with roots, shrubs with roots, (except if greenhouse grown throughout the year), logs and pulpwood, (except if moved to a mill operation under a compliance agreement), firewood, mobile homes and associated equipment, and cut Christmas trees are prohibited from moving out of the quarantined area unless articles are certified as gypsy moth free.

The gypsy moth is a destructive, exotic forest pest that was accidentally introduced into the United States in 1869. It is currently established throughout the Northeast and parts of the upper Midwest.

The Office of Plant Industry Services manages the gypsy moth program

across the Commonwealth. Program areas include: Suppression, Slow the Spread, Quarantine and Regulatory.

movement of the gypsy moth from areas which are [infested \(quarantine area\)](#) to those areas which are not in-

Gypsy Moth Suppression

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services cooperates with the U.S. Forest Service and localities to suppress gypsy moth populations and protect contiguously forested areas with priority to residential, forested and high-use public recreational areas. This program is locally based with infested localities determining their own level of participation. Requirements for participation can be found in the [Virginia Gypsy Moth Suppression Program Guidelines](#). Federal cost-share money may be available for participating localities.

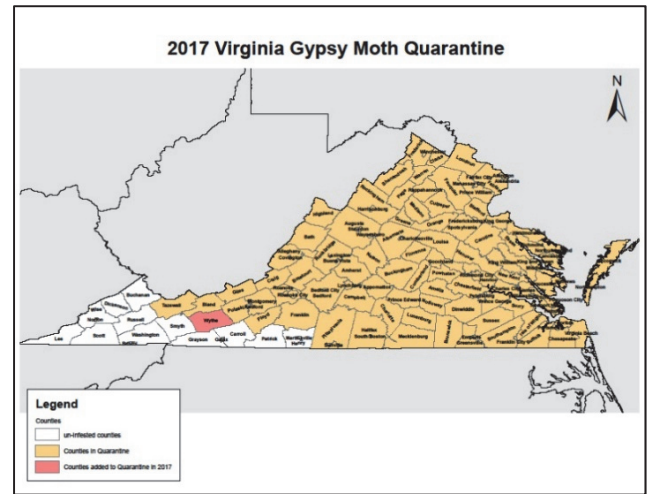
Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread

Virginia participates in the [Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Foundation](#), which establishes a formal framework for cooperation among states and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to slow the spread of the gypsy moth.

The Office of Plant Industry Services conducts annual surveys at the edge of the generally infested area in an effort to find low gypsy moth populations. The goal of the Slow the Spread program is early detection so that these small gypsy moth infestations can be more easily managed.

Gypsy Moth Quarantine & Regulatory

The goal of the [Virginia Gypsy Moth Quarantine](#) is to prevent the artificial



fed. The Office of Plant Industry Services conducts gypsy moth surveys each year to determine when population levels warrant adding new localities to the quarantine.

The gypsy moth regulatory program provides assistance to businesses which may be impacted by requirements of the [Virginia Gypsy Moth Quarantine](#). Businesses moving [regulated articles](#) must ensure that these articles are free of the gypsy moth. The Office of Plant Industry Services can conduct inspections or enter into compliance agreements with impacted businesses to allow for self-inspections and certification of [regulated articles](#). To obtain information about compliance agreements, please contact 804.786.3515.

If you are planning to move a recreational vehicle, shed, outdoor furniture, equipment or toys from an area infested with the gypsy moth to an area that is not infested, visit [Your-MoveGypsyMothFree.com](#) to see how you can conduct an inspection and ensure compliance with state and federal gypsy moth quarantines.

Contact:

Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread

Larry Bradfield - 540.394.2507
gypsymoth@vdacs.virginia.gov

Gypsy Moth Suppression and Regulatory -
Tina MacIntyre, 804.786.3515
Tina.macintyre@vdacs.virginia.gov

Provided by Danny Neel, VDACS Marketing,
Danny.Neel@vdacs.virginia.gov Abingdon, VA

VCTGA Board Meeting Update 3/15/17

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. by President Jeff Gregson with the following present: Greg Lemmer, John Carroll, Paris and Kathy Rasnic, John Houston, Tommy Naylor, Dave Thomas, Danny Neel Kyle Peer and Jeff Miller. (Absent: Robert O'Keeffe and Tim Williams).

Financial Report – Jeff Miller reviewed the reports that had been emailed to the board prior to the meeting. He noted that the total cash assets were \$20,198, as of 12/31/16, down about \$1,500 from the previous year. Membership dues were down by about 7 members. On the P&L, it was noted that includes the final grant #4 reimbursement for \$8,921. The meeting expenses were higher in 2016, but some of the grant funds covered some of the meeting expenses. 2016 expenses were in line with previous years' expenses.

USDA Specialty Crop Grant – Greg Lemmer reviewed the new grant application that he had just submitted for \$30,016 for upgrades to the website and to tie in with the national Christmas Tree Promotion Board marketing initiative that began in 2016. It also includes updates on marketing materials, banners, signs and exhibits at the State Fair of Virginia and the MANTS trade show in 2019 and 2020.

Membership – Jeff Miller reported that membership renewals were in line with previous years and that dues reminders will be sent out to members not having renewed yet. Jeff

Miller will send the board a complete membership and non-member contact list and dues form to contact non-members and to offer them the opportunity to join the VCTGA. It was the consensus of the board to propose to the membership that the VCTGA dues be raised \$10 to cover the increased assessment to the NCTA for the TIP program.

State Fair – Jeff Gregson reported that he had attended a commodity meeting at the State Fair, discussing plans on how to drive more traffic to the Pavilion, change the traffic flow, provide more signage, and tie the exhibits together in a more cohesive fashion. There was some discussion the 2017 VCTGA exhibit with the possibility of working with the pumpkin growers and/or setting up a Christmas photo op area for folks to take the Christmas family photo and/or selfies with a Christmas tree with battery LED lights. Jeff Miller discussed the option of providing information to the schools who have tours through the State Fair.



*Dave Robishaw and Danny Neel
representing the VCTGA at MANTS*

MANTS – Danny Neel reported that the VDACS sponsored booth at MANTS for the VCTGA went well in January with a record attendance on the first day of the show and over 11,000 people attending over a 3-day period and over 1,000 exhibitors. VDACS is tentatively signed up for the space in 2018 and the VCTGA may be able to cover the expense in 2019 and 2020 with grant funds. He also noted that it would be good for have different growers at the exhibit.

There were more inquires this year on sources of trees, wreaths, tips etc.

News Journal – Jeff Miller thanked Paris Rasnic and Tommy Naylor for providing articles for the News Journal and noted that there is still a need for profile article. It was the consensus of the board the present the idea of going to a periodic e-News format after the annual meeting and not print copies of the News Journal. Members would be able to receive more timely info and could still print it out if they want print copies.

IT'S CHRISTMAS. KEEP IT REAL.

NCTA and CTBP Report – John Carroll reported that with one management company managing both groups, there would be better coordination of activities and efficiencies of operations. John is the current VCTGA representative to the NCTA. It was the consensus of the board that the VCTGA should nominate a board member for the CTBP Region 3.

Jim Rockis, President of the CTBP, will be making a presentation on the CTBP at the VCTGA Annual Meeting in August. It was recommended that he show the video of the 2016 promotional activities.

VCTGA 2017 Annual Meeting – John Carroll reviewed the tentative program for the VCTGA meeting on August 9-11, 2017 at the Wytheville Meeting Center.

Christmas Tree Primer Educational Program – Kyle Peer reported that he expected 20-25 attendees for the upcoming educational program on March 31. There will also be two Christmas tree farm tours in late May.

Future of VCTGA – Jeff Gregson reviewed the need to have another strategic planning meeting to update the 2010 plan and to plan for replacement of Horticulture Management Associates in a couple of years, when Jeff Miller retires. It was the consensus of the board to plan on a strategic planning meeting for the 2nd week of September in Waynesboro and obtain the services of a facilitator. Jeff Miller will follow up with a location and facilitator.

Scholarships – Jeff Miller reminded the board, on behalf of Robert O’Keeffe, that the scholarship deadline is April 1 and to help spread the word on the scholarships.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

VCTGA Board Meeting, Wednesday, August 9, 2017, 4-6 p.m. at the Wytheville Convention Center with dinner to follow.

Provided by Jeff Miller, secretary@VirginiaChristmasTrees.org

Have You Renewed your NCTA Membership?

The NCTA office has been receiving membership renewals at a brisk pace during the first two months of 2017. If you have not renewed your membership, you are encouraged to do so at your earliest convenience to ensure that you don’t miss the Spring issue of the American Christmas Tree Journal or you opportunity to participate in the National Christmas Tree Contest.

Not currently a member? We encourage you to take a look at the work that the association does on behalf of the industry and join your fellow growers in furthering the industry. Please click here for a membership application!

*National Christmas Tree Association
www.realchristmastrees.org*



News from the National Christmas Tree Association

New Pesticide Applicator Certification Regs

EPA has announced a further delay in the effective date of new regulations governing certification of pesticide applicators. Proposed new rules include:

- Enhanced applicator competency standards
- Minimum age for certified applicators
- Maximum recertification interval of five years
- Training program requirement for non-certified applicators using restricted use pesticides (RUP’s)
- Eliminates the special process to allow non-readers to gain certification

The original effective date was March 6, 2017, and was pushed back to May 22 in accordance with Presidential directive freezing new regulations pending a review by the new administration. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) opposed the new regulations, citing an undue financial burden for the states, largely responsible for implementation of the new rules.

Killing WOTUS

Following the President’s signing of the

Executive Order aimed at withdrawing the [Waters of the US, or WOTUS rule](#), on March 3 the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers released a [Notice of Intention to Review and Rescind or Revise the Clean Water Rule](#). The notice, signed by EPA Administrator Pruitt and by Douglas Lamont, senior official at the Department of the Army, was published March 6 in the Federal Register.

The new administration’s strategy is to review the rule through a formal notice-and-comment rule-making process and to contemplate more narrowly interpreting the term “navigable waters,” as defined in the CWA, in a method consistent with the view of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in *Rapanos v. United States*. It is expected to be a lengthy process.

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Christmas Tree Promotion Board



Rockis Elected Chair of CTPB

At the Christmas Tree Promotion Board's recent meeting, Jim Rockis was elected to serve as the Chairman of the board for the next year. Rockis, a seedling producer and Christmas tree grower from West Virginia, was originally named to the board in January of 2015 and was recently re-appointed by former Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. Rockis succeeds Betty Malone of Oregon in this position where she served for two years.

"I have so much respect for Betty," commented Jim Rockis. "The time that she devoted to this program and her commitment to creating a strong foundation is incredible."

Rockis has chaired the Research Committee for the CTPB and has been very visible at state and regional meetings over the last two years, representing the Promotion Board.

Joining Rockis as officers of the Promotion Board are Rex Korson of Korson's Tree Farms in Sidney, Michigan as Vice Chairman; Paul Battaglia of Battaglia Ranch Christmas Tree Farm in San Martin, California as Treasurer and Beth Walterscheidt of Evergreen Farms in Elgin, Texas as Secretary.



Christmas Tree Promotion Board Shares Campaign Highlights

Following on the heels of its first, fully-funded promotional campaign, the Christmas Tree Promotion Board shared a campaign summary video with hundreds of Christmas tree producers across the country.

"The video is a highlights reel of sorts; sharing the fun, heartwarming and creative activations from the 2016 promotional campaign," notes CTPB Executive Director, Tim O'Connor. "The video provides growers the opportunity to see what they likely missed during the busy harvest and selling season."

These sessions were also an opportunity to hear grower feedback on the campaign and what they would like to see as the campaign moves forward.

The CTPB is hoping to host an on-line webinar featuring the video and a question and answer session for growers who may not have seen the video at a local meeting. Details on the session will be announced to growers via email.

2016 Review and What's New for 2017

Concept Farm, CTPB's ad agency, presented detailed results on consumer reach for each of the activations that were a part of the 2016 campaign. Board members learned how each activation was executed, it's related costs and the measurable reach for each event.

A part of the campaign budget was pre- and post-campaign consumer research. The research was enlightening and provided tremendous guidance on potential customers, their motivations and tendencies, as well as their propensity to purchase real or artificial Christmas trees. Most importantly, the research provided insight into messag-

ing that would appeal to our target audience and where to reach our target customers.

Based on the results of the 2016 campaign, the Promotion Board chose to adopt a campaign plan for 2017 that includes the following:

- The CTPB management team will create and manage the 2017 campaign strategy and secure contracts with both the ad agency and public relations firm.
- **Engage Concept Farm once again as the ad agency** for the campaign and keep the "It's Christmas. Keep it Real!" tagline.
- **Select a new public relations firm**, to join the CTPB campaign team to maximize the reach of our consumer messages.
- **Increase grower involvement** in the campaign by providing easier and earlier access to campaign assets.
- **Increase grower outreach**; training growers how to use the campaign by providing social media training in person and on-line, and expand grower-direct communications efforts.
- **Engage CTPB management team member, Marsha Gray**, for additional hours and focus efforts on grower engagement and communications. To create that available time, Gray is resigning her position as the Executive Director of the Michigan Christmas Tree Association.

The Promotion Board will be sharing campaign updates as we move through the summer and approach Christmas 2017.





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