

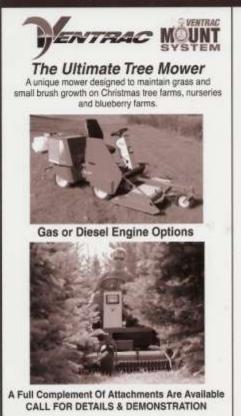


It's Twilight Time Again

Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association www.christmas-trees.org



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ORGANIZATION & INDUSTRY NEWS

Did winter come and go while we were sleeping? A few months rest after a busy season is always welcomed. Spring has sprung, twice again, giving us incentive to get out of the house and get to work. For us "Anxious Eddies", we jumped at the chance to get our planting, early spraying and fertilizing done and out of the way. We absorbed the warmth, even if it meant getting heat stroke, blocked sinuses and watering to combat the endless dry conditions.

The "others"...those "Steady Eddies". remained un-flinched by mother nature's March temptations. They watched us from their office window, smiling and steadfast with their planned strategies. Planting just before the rains came, in cool, comfortable weather. How did they know mother nature would flip the switch on then off again?

Interesting to note that wholesale nurseries, chemical manufacturers and distribution centers appeared overwhelmed and unprepared for the onslaught of exceptionally early requests. The good news is, orders came in early and seasonal workers went back to work a lot sooner, giving our economy a little boost.



On April 3, Dave Butt represented the MCTA on Ag Day at the State House. Our table attracted some interest at the well attended event. Dave agrees that our participation is important to maintain

MCTA visibility in the Agricultural community. And, a good way to support the work of Rick Leblanc and the Agriculture Resource Department. Scott Soares, the Dept of Agriculture . Commissioner, will be leaving his post and a new commissioner will be appointed.

It's TWILIGHT TIME again. There are three meetings this year. We hope you get a chance to attend at least one of the scheduled meetings in June. Details of the meetings are in this issue and a follow-up email reminder will be coming to you prior to the first meeting.

Email Addresses: In order to serve you better, the association will periodically be sending the members emails for upcoming meetings and events. If you have not registered an email address with us, please take a few minutes to send it to Dave Morin, our email manager. Your email address is for MCTA use only and not for any 3rd party use. Send to: Dave at info@arrowheadacres.com

Peter Sweet has plans to update a 2005 MCTA survey at the annual meeting. Member input is appreciated and invaluable to future offerings the board can provide to the membership. The success and strength of the association depends on you. Please help us, help you.

The Big "E" plans are shaping up. If you have some nice tree farm photos to share, Cindy Cranston would love to add them to the exhibit booth this year. You can mail, email or bring photos to a any meeting . Happy to report our "Free Tree Contest" is up and running on our website.



MCTA MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Westminster, Ma 5:30 pm: Attendance: Tom Cranston, Rob Leab, Joe Meichelbeck, Casey Vandervalk, Dave Butt, Dave Morin, Greg Davagian, Larry Flaccus, Dan Pierce, Gloria Ellsworth, Cynthia Cranston, Peter Sweet, Carol Nims, Dave Radebaugh, and Jim Colburn.

.President Tom Cranston: The minutes of the January 2012 meeting were approved as printed. Joe reported that the YTD budget and disbursements may be slightly higher.

NECTA Report:

Under consideration by the "Big E" is a new building for the Christmas tree display as well as a possible move to what would be considered a better location.

The "BIG E":

Upon approval from the board, Casey agreed to design and produce signage related to the "Free Tree Contest" at the booth. This includes a "QR" code (quick response code) that can be read by cell phones and gives details about the program directly from our website.

MA Building Tree Display: The board approved a \$100 appropriation towards the cost of a Mass grown tree for 2012. A notice to our members advertizing the need of a ten foot tree, suitable for display will be in Shearings.

LEGISTATION COMMITTEE:

Board members recently received an email from a State House Lobbyist offering his services related to pending legislative changes. Discussion expressed neither need nor desire to hire the individual.

MCTA WEBSITE:

The "Free Tree Contest" for 2012 is posted on our website. It was decided the only information needed from the participants would be an email address. It has yet to be determined how the collected email addresses will be used and is open for discussion and consideration.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Dave Butt and Dan Pierce 1st terms end in 2012. Both have agreed to serve a second term on the board. Jim Colburn will succeed Julie Gauld as Secretary in July. The Vice President position will be open in July once Rob Leab becomes President.

TWILIGHT MEETINGS

The board expressed their desire to strive for four (4) twilight meetings per year as a vital part of the MCTA's mission. A concerted effort will be made to insure that goal.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting will be held Saturday, September 15, 2012 at Dave Radebaugh's Farm, in Belchertown. Meeting details are in the planning stages to include a guest speaker related to IPM that could offer pesticide credits as well. Other speakers are under consideration as well.

"SHEARINGS"

Progress on integration of an electronic newsletter is moving along as scheduled. The "Shearings" PDF (the online version) will be trial tested with the Board members for May. The board will provide feedback and suggestions. Gloria Ellsworth has agreed to be the communication liaison with the National Association.

NEW BUSINESS

Peter Sweet proposed to update the 2005 MCTA survey. Peter will re-work the survey, to make it quick, simple and objective. The survey will be handed out and completed by the membership, at the 2012 Annual Meeting.

A liaison proposal was presented to the board by an outside merchant service provider at the April 11th meeting. After careful review and discussion, the board voted not to endorse or agree to the vendor's proposal.

The Board authorized Jim Colburn to work with Julie in anticipation of the transition to Secretary, prior to the ratification vote at the annual meeting.

Meeting notes submitted by Jim Colburn & Julie Gauld MCTA

Cultural and Pest Management Update For Christmas Tree Plantations February 2012

Reprinted by Permission By Tom Rathier, Emeritus Soil Scientist Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Valley Laboratory, P.O. Box 248, Windsor, CT 06095

In the update that appeared in the previous edition (November 2011) of The Real Tree Line, I mentioned that Connecticut had received such plentiful precipitation (rainfall and snow melt combined). We were only a few inches from the state record amount and that we would beat the record by year's end. Well, I was right. But I never imagined that we would reach the record in the fashion we did. On October 29, just 2 weeks after writing that update, most of the central and northern parts of the state received another 1-2 inches of precipitation in the form of a freak Nor'easter snowstorm. That storm and a few subsequent rainfalls brought us the all time precipitation record.

For a snowstorm to be the source of 2 inches of precipitation, close to 2 ft. of snow needs to fall. Our snowfall totals may have been a bit short of 2 feet but it was so wet that we had no trouble hitting the water total. Any time snow is that wet and heavy, there's a greater chance of damage to trees as was evidenced by the stunning tree damage and subsequent power outages that resulted. The greatest proportion of problem causing damaged was in hardwood trees whose leaves hadn't fallen yet, which maximized snow interception and, consequently causing breakage. Most leaf-bare and dead trees didn't catch enough snow to break.

Large, native white pines, with their somewhat brittle limbs, were the conifers that caused the most damage. Multiple stemmed conifers, especially arborvitae used as specimens and screens, also injuries. experienced significant Properly maintained, single stemmed landscape conifers experienced very little damage to themselves and to structures and infrastructure. From those observations, I initially thought that the equally (or even better) sheared trees typical of our Christmas tree plantations would be similarly unaffected. I

even saw very little damage when I visited several tree farms in the weeks after the snowstorm.

However, I have since heard from several growers that they have had snow load damage to lower branches of Douglas firs. Some of the branches were outright snapped in two; others were partially broken. Still, other branches were bent significantly and remain misshapen. It's important to note: it appears species with more flexible braches like Douglas fir (and, possibly, young white pine) have experienced snow load damage. Firmer branched species, like the true firs and spruces are less likely to have such problems.

The same conditions that resulted in the delayed leaf fall for the hardwoods are likely, at least partially, responsible for Christmas tree snow load damages.

Leaf color change and eventual drop is triggered by day length, total available light and lower temperatures. Deciduous trees initiate production of hormones that trigger leaf drop and harden buds, twigs and branches. With the exception of annual needle loss, which typically occurs in the spring as new needles are produced, conifers also prepare for the winter by fortifying their branches, twigs and buds. Changes in any environmental trigger can result in a delay of winterization which may have been why some branches were bent excessively.

Trunk splitting. Another effect of the delayed arrival of cold temperatures observed by many growers was post-harvest development of vertically split trunks of freshly or recently harvested trees. Trunk splitting basically occurs because the trunk (stem) contains more moisture than it ordinarily does during dormant periods and then loses some of that moisture quite rapidly causing the remaining wood to dry. This rapid change results in drastic increase in capillary tension. When capillary tension exceeds the tensile strength of the wood, cells can collapse allowing cracks to begin.



Cultural and Pest Management Update Continued

Since trunk splitting is almost exclusively vertical, hydration during the post-harvest display period can still be successful but there could be tree stand complications. Split trunks could actually be returned to intact condition with screws or some sort of binding or cinching as long as an appropriate tree stand is used. The pre-drilled/pin tree stand, which requires a centered hole drilled in the center of the trunk base may not support a split trunk tree. More details on trunk splitting can be found in an article by North Carolina State University Extension Specialist Jeffrey H. Owen available on line at the following christmastrees.org/research/trunk splitting.pdf or simply searching for Christmas tree trunk splitting.

Possible winter injuries. It's important to remember that the bulk of the moisture lost by harvested conifers occurs not from the cut end of the trunk but through their needles, as a result of respiration, just as a still standing tree. As troublesome as it may be to have to replace the water in the tree stand so often, a cut tree that efficiently transpires water is usually a great indicator that the tree had a good year in the field. Perhaps more than most years, the 2011 growing season was quite favorable for tree health. For the first time in several years, we had a virtually uninterrupted supply of ample soil moisture and trees on most plantations remained well hydrated.

As happened in 2011, well hydrated trees usually mean a successful harvest/postharvest season and that's what we saw for the most part. It's possible, though, that good hydration combined with a slow or at least slower than ordinary progression toward dormancy could lead to overwintering problems. Most of the weather and climate observations made so far in this update are strongly suggestive of a real possibility that woody plants in general and Christmas trees in particular may not have had the opportunity to properly slow down into dormancy.

At the time of the damaging snowstorm (October 29), autumn had not progressed significantly enough for many deciduous tree that their leaves had not fully turned to fall colors, let alone begin falling to the ground. In my yard not far from Bradley Airport, the lawn waited until after Thanksgiving to turn its color from green to winter yellow and it actually greened back up for a while in early December. Our

soil did not freeze until around New Year's Day but as I write this update on January 23, we are experiencing a thaw with expected temperatures this week in the 40s and 50s. If temperatures plunge significantly as winter progresses, it's possible that the combination of well hydrated trees and less than adequate dormancy status could result in moister and tender woody tissues and buds that could be subject to freeze damage. We'll need to keep a close watch for that as winter turns into spring.

Planting season approaches. By the time the next update is published in May, many growers will have already begun planting out young transplants in their production fields. Any comments about transplant survival I make will miss their mark. So it makes sense to review some of the strategies that help improve survival now. Survival losses in the field are costly, both in plant material and in time lost to sales dates. The best planting strategy is to take the time to plant each transplant at the proper depth (quite close to the surface) with as many roots as possible spread out rather than pointing straight down. Though more time consuming, this is always the most successful approach for bare root transplants. To the extent that some of the roots of plug grown transplants can be teased out of the plug and its potting medium, growers should make the effort to do so to improve establishment and subsequent survival.

To avoid losses due to white grub feeding on roots, many growers have had great success pre-treating the root systems of transplants by dipping them in a solution of the insecticide bifenthrin just before planting. This treatment offers good protection from white grub damage throughout the crucial first year in the ground. Bifenthrin for this use is available as Talstar Nursery F and it is a restricted use product.

For those who are already accustomed to dipping transplants prior to planting, an additional product may be of interest. Dr. Rich Cowles completed a trial of dip treatments that may be of use in preventing or, at least, limiting infection of roots and stems by water molds like *Phytophthora* which have been implicated in transplant (and even established tree) losses in plantations throughout the US and worldwide. Among the dip products he had successful results with were two systemic fungicides,

Cultural and Pest Management continued pg 9

Twilight Meetings 2012

June 6 - 5:30 pm Davagian Tree Farm Host: Greg Davigian Sutton, MA

19 Merriam Lane

508 -865 - 3413

Davagian Tree Farm was established in 1980. This 5 acre family-run choose and cut operation specializes in personal attention and customized service. No advertising is needed. They sell out each year with a loyal customer. Trees are planted on flat, former hay fields and easily accessed. Species include, Fraser, Balsam, and Canaan fir which are grown along with limited Blue spruce, White and Scots Pine. Exotics such as Meyers spruce and Grand Fir have been tried on a limited basis.

During the season, a small gift shop offers custom and ready-made wreaths and other fresh green products. Majority of the wreath business is customized for long-time patrons. Samples of greenery products will be on display. New ideas welcomed. A few pre-cut trees are brought in to supplement sizes and species not available on the farm, to meet the demands of our loyal customers.

We are thrilled to have Karen Menezes, an independent associate and contractor for URI and the State of Rhode Island Division of Agriculture. She will focus her attention on armored scale; treatments and recommendations, and will also address mites, common insect pests, diseases, and water-related problems at this meeting. Her background includes 30 +years in agriculture and trains farmers in Good Agricultural Practices. The Christmas tree industry has always been at the center of her work.

Directions: From east and west, take Mass Pike, exit 10A to Route 146 South. Go 4.5 miles, take a right at traffic light by Tony's Pizza, onto Boston Road. Go 2.5 miles on Boston Road, passing through the stop sign at Sutton Center. Stay to the RIGHT of the fork at Sutton High School, and turn right on Merriam Lane – farm opposite the school tennis courts. Food will be available at 5:30.

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June 13 - 5:30 pm Evergreen Tree Farm

Host: Bill , Julie & Bob Gauld

155 Kendall Hill Road

Sterling, Ma

978-365-5818

The land was purchased in 1979, and Bill sold off some desirable lumber toward a down payment. Then we started clearing - it was all in mixed hardwoods and pine. From the first Scots pine planted that year, the farm has grown and changed to 15 +/- acres of mostly fir, with some Blue spruce, Meyer spruce and a few naturally seeded White pine. Also a few experimental fir "exotics" were planted. Most took too long to grow, or didn't shape up, and were not continued. Some have been used for swags (Noble fir primarily). After commuting from the center of town for 7 years, we built the house in 1986. We operated out of a small shed, then built the carriage shed in 1994.

If you come , you will see re-lining from 6 to 5 feet, Hemlock Scale, root rots in progress, and drought impacting trees- mostly Fraser - in wet areas of our clay soil. The remaining woodlot (about 20 acres) was heavily damaged in the 2008 ice storm, and much remains to be done to clear out broken limbs and/or trees.

Directions: From the center of Sterling on rtes. 62 and 12, take **Maple Street** across from the common, between a former church and the old town hall. Toward the top of the hill, bear right. You will be on Kendall Hill Rd. Follow signs to #155. Look for Christmas tree sign at the end of long driveway. Farm is 2.3 miles from center of town.

June 20 – 5:30 pm

Greenwood Tree Farm

Hosts: Crystal, Andy, Wes & Glenn Card

96 Dudley Rd

Billerica, MA www.greenwoodtreefarm.com 978-667-5380

The Card Family started planting Christmas trees at the farm in 1984. They are presently growing Fraser Fir and a few Canaan Fir. Some Fraser Fir will be planted this year.

The Card Family realizes the importance keeping customers happy and keep them returning to their farm year after year. They have always thought ahead and planned to have a steady supply of trees in spite of usual booms and busts that we all experience in Christmas tree growing. They offer an attractive shop and demonstrate how they supplement what they grow. During the season they sell wreaths, roping, swags, mantle pieces and baskets. Some are custom made and decorated and some are supplemented from a supplier.

They find their website draws many customers to their farm. The Card family is committed to providing a quality tree and an enjoyable experience for all. Please feel free to view their website before the twilight meeting. They would be happy to answer any questions and teach us some new things. <u>greenwoodtreefarm.com</u>

In addition to Christmas tree farming. Crystal and her family are very involved in beekeeping, honey bee culture and honey production. Crystal will provide a "honey tasting" so we can try six types of raw honey and one that is somewhat processed.

They will serve food at 5:30 and the meeting will begin at 6:00 pm, in order that we can eat together. The food is courtesy of Essex County Tree Farmers Jack Jackson, with help from Laura Dooley. It is a wonderful thank you gift for our farm's support at Topsfield Fair. And, a reminder that the competition can only continue if we do support it. Please bring your own chairs.

Directions From 495: get on Rte 3 south, Exit 35A. Take the Concord Road exit # 27. Take a left off the ramp, towards Bedford, then take your fourth right. That is Dudley Road. Go ³/₄ of a mile to a stop sign. Go straight for another ¹/₂ mile, you will see the signs for the farm on your left.

Cultural and Pest Management Update continued from pg 7...

both of which are salts of phosphorous acid. The fungicides are named **Fosphite** and **Alude**, they both have conifers on their label and they both have root dips on their labels. They are known to be compatible with bifenthrin so those growers who are already using that dip may want to try it. Rich has described his research on phosphorous acid and other dip applied products in an article to be published shortly in the American Christmas Tree Journal. Keep watch for that publication. Of course, plant successes may only be as good as the water supply young trees have in the field over the first few years. It would be nice to have the ample water supply that occurred in 2011 each year but that can't be counted on so it makes sense to practice soil moisture conservation strategies that include mulching with reliable organic material such as aged wood chips applied in a 1 to 2 inch deep layer sometime within 4 to 6 weeks after transplanting. Have a good transplant season and feel free to contact me regarding the topics discussed in this update or regarding any aspect of Christmas tree production. thomas.rathier@ct.gov.

\$ Dollars & Sense \$

The Positives vs Negatives of Accepting Credit & Debit Cards for a Seasonal Business



<u>Part 1</u>

Been to a grocery store , gas station or shop lately? Ever notice how the majority of people to pay for their items? In today's world, more and more consumers rely on plastic in their everyday lives. It allows them to buy anything, anywhere and anytime with a swipe.

Today, hundreds of thousands of seasonal, internet and small businesses accept credit cards. Many existing businesses are "taking the plunge" to accept credit and debit cards for the first time. As with any other business venture, the companies that do their homework typically have a better chance of being successful.

To help start your homework, let's take a look at the advantages for accepting credit and debit cards for your business.

What Are The Advantages:

- Convenience and responding to customer references: In this day in age, people expect to be able to pay by credit or debit card.
- Encouraging impulse purchases: Credit and debit card users are more apt to buy on "impulse" at the checkout.
- Avoid loss sales opportunities: If a customer has to leave to get cash at an ATM or bank, they may not return.
- Accepting Credit Cards Will Increase Current Sales: Studies show that on average, businesses that transition to accepting credit cards, show a huge increase in volume, almost overnight
- Increase your Credibility and Legitimize Your Business: The public knows a Merchant Account status is not always easy to attain for a seasonal business. These logos create a sense of "trust" in your customer's mind. If they trust you, they will buy from your business.

- Increase Your Average Sales: When consumers pay with credit or debit cards they are more inclined to purchase the "upgrade" product or service.
- Increases Cash Sales: The mere presence of a MasterCard/Visa logo's displayed on your website and in your store/farm stand can increase your cash sales as much as 29%. According to controlled studies, the presence of these signs creates advertising which creates interest.
- Improved Security. Cuts back on Bad Checks and Collection Costs: Less cash on your premises decreases potential chance of robbery. Decreases collection costs of bad checks. A reputable Merchant Account Provider screens for fraudulent transactions with the use of verification.
- Compete with your Competition: Your competition is already accepting credit/debit cards.
- Easing Your Administration Time and Cost: A regular statement of card transactions is easier to reconcile than numerous cash transactions, especially at the end of the day.

What Are The Disadvantages

Like anything else, the benefits of increasing sales and profits by accepting credit/debit cards do not come without risks.

- Paying a percentage: You will have to pay a percentage of sales that are paid to you whether it a debit or credit card in rates and fees to the Merchant Provider and to the MasterCard or Visa or Credit Card provider.
- Fees: You may incur monthly fees, terminal rental fees (if you do not purchase a terminal), additional processing fees or service fees from the merchant provider. Each type of credit card comes with its own interchange fee.
- **Posting of Deposit**: You usually have to wait from one to three days for your money to post in your checking account.

Continued on page 14

Cryptomeria Scale: The New Pest in Town

Reprinted article by Jill R. Sidebottom, NC Cooperative Extension, Vol. 37, No. 4 Winter 2010, Limbs &Needles, NC Christmas Tree Association,

Scales are becoming more and more of a problem in North Carolina Christmas trees. Elongate hemlock scale (EHS) continues to spread, and growers have problems getting good control.

Now a scale new to North Carolina is showing up in fields. Cryptomeria scale (Aspidiotus cryptomeriae) has been a pest in Christmas tree in the Northeast for several years but until this year was not found in NC. Ask a Pennsylvania Christmas tree grower and they will tell you that between the two, elongate or Cryptomeria, the Cryptomeria is far worse. Unfortunately, Cryptomeria scale was positively identified in two locations in North Carolina in 2010., near Franklin and in West Jefferson, opposite ends of the mountains.

Armored scales like EHS and Cryptomeria are hard to control because the scale's protective covering makes it hard for a pesticide to penetrate. Not only do these scales produce a waxy covering, they also bury themselves underneath the waxy cuticle of the needle. Armored scales don't feed in the vascular tissue of the plant, so it is harder for systemic materials to control them. Also, both of these scales produce the most venerable stage, the crawler, over a prolonged period of time. If they all hatched at once, they would be easy to control, but they don't.

Cryptomeria scales are similar to EHS in several ways. Both live on the underside of the needles and live scales will be on needles that are several years old. That means to get control, you have to get the spray back in the canopy of the tree.

Cryptomeria scales have a very similar life cycle to EHS. Both have to non-synchronous generations produced each year. The mature males of both are tiny winged insects that find and mate with the female. The eggs of both are laid under the protective covering of the adult female. Both will produce crawlers throughout the growing season, with peak production occurring in May/June and again in August. Because of this, the timing of pesticide applications in the summer months is the same. The same pesticides are effective against both.

Cryptomeria scale and EHS differ in their appearance. Cryptomeria scales are round and look like a row of pits or fried eggs on the back side of the needle. EHS are long; the males are white and the females are brown.

The biggest difference is the impact on the tree. EHS becomes a nuisance because the white waxy covering of the adult male can be readily seen on the needles, affecting tree quality. On some trees, there are yellow blotches on the needles, but this rarely happens and there is typically little reduction in tree growth. With Cryptomeria scale infestations, you don't have the white discoloration of the needles, but even a few scales will produce yellow, blotchy needles and premature needle shed, greatly impacting the tree. In just a few weeks, infested trees become unsaleable due to the rapid spread of Cryptomeria scales.

Why do we continue to have such problems with scales? Warmer winters may be partly responsible. That allows the scales to keep producing crawlers in winter months. Hemlocks dying in the forests with hemlock woolly adelgid are removing a food source for scales which may be another reason. But probably the number one reason is pesticide use.

We've stopped depending on Di-Syston for twig aphid control. Though this product doesn't control scales, neither does it make scales worse by killing off natural enemies. But the materials that do control scales such as Dimethoate and Asana, may also be making scales worse due to an adverse effect on predators. Research has demonstrated that Dimethoate sprayed on one part of a large

Cryptomaria Scale continued pg. 12

Cryptomeria Scale continued

hemlock will result in an increase in scales on the other untreated part of the tree. And

synthetic pyrethroids like Asana and Talstar have a long history of making scales worse. So what is a grower to do? First of all, be on the lookout for any scales, and especially Cryptomeria. If you think you have Cryptomeria scale, let your county extension service know, in order to keep tract.

The second piece of advice is quite simple- don't forget IPM. All IPM principles will help with scale control. Scout for all pests.

Only treat when you have to. Use the least toxic material available. Rotate materials. Get as much out of each spray as possible but don't add insecticides that you don't need.

If you have to treat for scales, consider spraying in June. Did you know you can control scales, woolies, twig aphids, and rosette bud mites been the least used window of insecticide application because of fears of damaging new growth. But several growers have observed that when they treat rosette buds in June solely with Dimethoate, they don't have problems with EHS. Add Asana to the mix and you'll catch both woollies and scales if you have them. Twig aphids will be controlled before they can lay eggs for next year. Applications of Dimethoate + Asana will control scales from June through mid-August. This will also control twig aphids for the following year. A miticide such as Envidor can be added if spider mites or rust mites have been shown through scouting to be a problem.

The most effective applications have been made with a high pressure sprayer which isn't a lot of fun. Heat stress for workers wearing PPE is a real issue in the summer, and even burning tree foliage becomes a possibility. Mist blower applications haven't always provided control in heavily infested trees. But if heavily infested trees are culled and then the rest of the trees are treated with a mist blower, we have observed that spread of scale to new trees will slow or even stop. This compromise between effectiveness and cost may be the best alternative. I'm sure much will change with scale recommendations in the coming years, so be sure to stay informed.

You can view my blog, Jill R Sidebottom @ fraseripm.blogspot.com.

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Effective, Selective and Less Laborious Approach for Managing Scale

By Richard S. Cowles: Reprinted from Limbs & Needles, Vol. 38, No. 2-Summer 2011.

Elongated hemlock scale (Fiorinia externa) and Cryptomeria scale (Aspidiotus cryptomeriae) are armoured scales of increasing importance in Christmas tree plantations. In previous work, I have determined that horticultural oil does not adequately suppress these scales.; furthermore, the potential for injury or surface wax discoloration on Balsam Fir, Douglas Fir and Colorado Blue Spruce necessitates finding alternatives to horticultural oil. Selective insecticides would kill scales rather than their natural enemies, including a parasitic wasp and three species of predatory beetles. Through foliar sprays of OnyxPro or Safari 20 SG are effective, but they completely exclude the beneficials. Pyriproxifen (Distance) has given adequate control of scales, but only when sprayed twice. Even thought this product is reputed to be selective, it also was detrimental to parasitoids.

A trial in 2008 compared the OnyxPro chemical control standard and an untreated check with various options that were anticipated to selectively suppress scale populations. The only treatments with good to outstanding levels of scale control were the OnyxPro (a full foliar spray) and basal trunk sprays with Safari 20SG. Trials in 2009 determined that a basal bark spray applied about bud break was optimal for controlling scales. The quantity of Safari required to manage scale populations increases as tree size increases.

One-half pound per acre should be sufficient for trees 5 ft. or shorter, 0.75 lb per acre for 6 ft.trees, and 1 lb or more will be needed for larger trees. Growers choosing this method to manage armored scales should make the application with a 3 gallon backpack and sprayer fitted with a controlled flow valve (to permit sprayer calibration) and a flat fan nozzle (such as a 6503E or 6504E) positioned to provide a vertical spray pattern. An appropriate dosage is 0.67 lb of Safari 20 SG per acre. This would amount to 3.5 ounces (100 grams) of product per 3 gallon tank, and 9 gallons of finished spray per acre.

For trees shorter than 6 ft, no more than one fluid oz of spray should be applied to a tree, and only the basal 10 inches of bark should be wetted. For trees larger than 6 ft., a higher volume will be required for effective control. Including a surfactant has not improved the penetration and transport of the active ingredient to the foliage of the tree. If you replant near stumps, you have widely varying sizes of trees. By spraying to just wet the bark, you will automatically adjust the dosage to match their different sizes. It is extremely important to spray both sides of the trunk, so that you will not end up with one-sided distribution of the insecticide in the tree.

Because Safari is ineffective against mites, and may not translocate quickly enough to prevent damage caused by Balsam twig aphids, I suggest using a full foliar spray of a Bifenthrin insecticide (OnyxPro, Telstar, or a properly labeled generic equivalent) just prior to bud break where mites, Balsam twig aphids and scales are all present, especially on larger trees.

Nearly perfect spray coverage is necessary to make this product work well to manage mites and scales, which is only possible with air-assisted equipment. Air blast sprayers, spraying inwards from the perimeter of blocks, generally do not give adequate spray coverage for trees near the center of the fields. If there are extraordinary populations of scales, this spray timing will not leave residues on new growth, and so a second spray may be necessary in June to completely protect the new growth.

I estimate that I may save several hours of labor per acre, which should save time when compared to thorough applications using backpack mist blower or hydraulic sprayers. The chemical cost will amount to \$50 to \$100 per acre. Only one spray should be necessary to achieve one season's control of scales.

Use of trade names does not constitute an endorsement of one product to the exclusion of others that may be suitable. Always read and follow pesticide label directions. Agricultural Experiment Station, Valley Lab, Windsor, CT 06095 <u>Richard .Cowels@po.state.ct.us</u>

Dollars & Sense: Credit Cards Continued..

- Items of Low Value: Transaction fees could be higher on low dollar value items. Some providers require a minimum purchase amount for processing.
- Chargeback Risk: The customer who pays you with a credit card has up to six months to dispute the charge, should they not be happy with the product or service. Should you decide to give the customer a credit, you will be charged for rate and fee for the "chargeback" credit transaction
- **Training:** You will need to train your staff, both in the technical and administrative issues, as well as fraud prevention.
- Your Money Can be Held Back By the Merchant Account Provider.: A ounce of prevention may be worth a ton of headaches. When filling out your Merchant Account Application, be sure to ask for a SEASONAL Merchant Account .so that you can deactivate your account when the season is over. This saves the money as the owner is not entailed to pay any credit card processing fees and avoid unnecessary charges to your account.
- **Debit Cards require a pin pad:** A separate pin pad or a special terminal is required for transactions

PART 2

The "Nuts & Bolts :Getting Started with Credit & Debit Card Processing

Since the implementation of the credit card processing for small business system will likely be a major step forward for the venture that you own, it is important to ask any questions that you come up with as you are comparing the credit system quotes that you receive. Only by asking these questions will you then be able to make the best selection from among the various credit services estimates that you are matched with.

Go to Your Bank: You will need to setup a business bank account, (if you do not have one already) to accept deposits from transactions. Some small banks and Credit Unions provide DBA accounts for seasonal businesses. Big banks will charge more for business accounts and may charge additional fees to maintain those accounts.

Choose a Merchant Account Provider

Choosing a merchant account provider can be an overwhelming experience. You need to make a wise, well-educated decision for your merchant account provider needs.

First and foremost, find a provider that has a proven track record. Check their <u>Better Business Bureau</u> <u>report</u>. If there are numerous complaints, turn around and walk away. You'll need to take your business elsewhere.

There is no advantage to going to your bank as a provider— in fact, only a disadvantage. In today's high-tech Internet world, banks have become antiquated and just aren't up to date on the latest technology in merchant accounts, especially in things like website ecommerce and wireless processing. In addition, banks that offer merchant accounts actually outsource the entire operation to a merchant account provider. As a result, you are better of going directly to a merchant account provider.

Second, find out if they offer a 100% money back guarantee. This way you can try them out for a period of time and see if what they provide you with matches what they promised. Any reputable merchant account provider will give you a guarantee.

Third, look into their customer service practices and their technical support options. What do current and former customers have to say about them? Do they offer a toll free customer service number? What are their customer service hours? Do they offer seasonal accounts? These are questions you need to ask.

Fourth, Next, check out their fees. Make sure they are reasonable, and one of the lower cost options out there. CAUTION: Be careful of those that offer deceptively low rates. If you find a provider offering significantly lower rates than everyone else then something is fishy. Run don't walk, they are sure to have hidden fees. After all, you can't get something for nothing and if the merchant account provider is charging well below what everyone else is charging, there's something wrong and you're probably going to wind up paying for it with horrible customer service. *Continued to pg 17*

Recommendations for Managing Pests in True Firs for Connecticut Growers¹

Reprinted information authored by Richard Cowles, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Valley Laboratory, Windsor, CT 06095

Product Name	Pest Controlled ²	Dosage/Acre	Comments	Cost (\$/Acre)2011
Envidor (local absorption)	Spruce Spider Mite Rust Mites	18 Fl. Oz.	Bud break timing best	\$39
OnyxPro ³ (contact only, not systemic)	Balsam twig aphid Spruce spider mite Armored scales	6-8 fl. oz	 Need excellent spray deposition Kills beneficial Long residual Risk of resistance Good as clean-up spray 	\$ 21 - \$28
Provado or AdmirePro Imidacloprid generics	Balsam twig aphid Cinara Aphid	4 fl. Oz with organosilico ne surfactant	 Foliar spray need good spray deposition low impact on beneficials 	\$ 5-\$9
(slowly systemic (soil) or local absorption (foliar)	Conifer root aphids White Grubs Cinara aphid Balsam woolly adelgid	24 fl. oz applied in the rain	 Soil banded or broadcast will control BTA in year following application reduces plant stress 	\$25
Safari 20 SG (highly systemic - dinotefuran)	Balsam twig aphid EHS	8-20 oz.	Bud break timing best Foliar spray kills beneficials best for large trees need good spray deposition Trunk Spray best for small trees safe for beneficials	\$60-\$150

http://www.ct.gov/caes

1 1*Always follow label directions. Trade names are mentioned for convenience only and do not constitute an endorsement.*

2 Boldface text indicates the principal target pests for the product

3 Restricted use pesticide, properly labeled generic bifenthrin products probably could be substituted. These require 3x the quantity stated for OnyxPro.

4 This is a new product registered for Christmas trees. To date, current knowledge or trial testing of this product has not been done in the Massachusetts. This publication, the MCTA, or affiliates including Richard Cowles aforementioned recommendations does not imply endorsement of this product or it's use in Christmas tree applications

<u>⁴ Newly Registered</u>	Balsam twig aphid		Folicar Spray in Fall	
<u>Product:</u>	Cinara aphid	.062 lb/Ac	Max applications- 3 per year.	Unknown
Sniper	Root weevil Spruce spider mite	3.9-12.8 oz.		
(restricted use)	Balsam woolly adelgid		For more information on	
(broad spectrum systemic-			"Sniper" go to	
25% Bifenthrin)	by Jill Sidebottom		Loveland Products.com.	
See Pg. 11 for more info				





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soiltest@psis.umass.edu

UMass Plant Diagnostic Lab 101 University Drive, Suite A7 Amherst, MA 01002 (413) 545-3208 - fax (413) 545-4385 umassgreeninfo.org/

Landscape & Nursery Insects: Bob Childs, (413) 545-1053, rchilds@psis.umass.edu

Landscape & Nursery Diseases: Dan Gillman, (413) 545-3208, dgillman@umext.umass.edu

Landscape & Nursery Weeds: Randy Prostak, (413) 577-1738, <u>rprostak@umext.umass.edu</u>

Dollars & Sense: Credit Cards Continued..

Five: Be sure to designate yourself as a "seasonal business owner", you can eliminate the need to apply for a merchant account one year and reapply the next. You can avoid yearly fees and charges by reactivating or deactivating your account as needed.

Six: You also shouldn't have to pay an application fee, setup fee, installation fee, programming fee or annual fee. Those are a lot of fees that many merchant account providers will try to stick you with. Be careful.

Ask your merchant account provider how they deal with the reserve issue. A reserve is a fee that the processor will keep back as insurance against chargeback's and other issues if you're considered a high risk. Make sure your provider doesn't do this.

Make sure that you're not given a cap in your monthly volume. Imagine that you're having a great month in sales, more than you've ever sold before. Suddenly, you're halfway through the month and you can't accept anymore credit cards. This can be the downfall of your business and it won't be your fault. Or will it? It may be if you didn't check into monthly caps before signing up with your merchant account provider.

Some pitfalls to avoid: be wary of long-term leases with early termination fees - if you are unhappy with your provider, you should be able to switch. Also watch for a tactic borrowed from the consumer credit card industry: low introductory rates that bump up after a few months. While all merchant providers will reserve the right to raise prices (MasterCard and Visa often change the rates they charge the providers), you should not go with one that signs you up for an increase.

Equipment and Start up Costs: For card-present transactions, the biggest up-front cost will be for the terminal, the machine used to swipe cards. Basic terminals typically go for between \$150 and \$300, terminals with printers are \$200 to \$500, and wireless terminals can run from \$500 to \$1000. As seasonal business, you may want to lease a terminal instead. Leases can run as little as \$25 up to \$100/month and prices can vary depending on the sophistication of the terminal and the length of the lease.

If a company is trying to charge you extraordinarily high equipment prices or if they're trying to push you into a lease, run the other way. Stay away from leases and never pay more for your equipment than what it's worth.

If you're setting up a new merchant account, it's usually best to get your terminals as part of the deal. But you can also buy them separately from outside sources...

Read the Contract: Make sure to read the contract in detail to understand all fees, minimum charges, the term of the agreement, and termination clauses. Some merchant account providers will not cover every point and leave it to you to uncover the details.

Lastly, consider other things when choosing a merchant account provider such as how long they have been in business, their technical competence, their email and phone availability, any training they provide, online reporting, accurate deposits and statements, and timely deposits.

The Bottom Line

Negotiation is key, if you decide to move forward. Do your homework and get as many quotes as you can from a reliable Merchant Service Provider.

Look at your past sales and the cost of not accepting Credit and Debit cards. Could you have sold a wreath or tree stand with that tree sale? Ask other seasonal vendors for their input. Think about the likelihood of getting just a few "extra" orders for your product or service because you carry credit and debit cards. Base it on your average sale, how much profit will you make from the sale and any additional sales of accessory items you carry. Estimate the cost and travel time to and from the bank for check cashing/deposits and bounced checks. Include your time and labor to reconcile cash and check payments.

Never settle for second best. Your business is depending on it.

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- April 15 (May Issue)
- □ July 15 (August Issue)
- □ Oct. 15 (November Issue)

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