Shearings

AUGUST 2012

M.C.T.A Annual Meeting 2012
Saturday September 15

Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association
www.christmas–trees.org

Photo on the Cover: Taken at the MCTA Annual Meeting October 2011. Pierce's Tree Farm Lunenburg, MA

Calendar

August	23	Grassy Weed Id Workshop French Hall Umass, Amherst
September	7-9	Maine CTA 50th Anniversary Newburgh , ME and Dover-Foxcroft, ME
September	12	Invasive Plant Management Umass, Amherst
September	14	The "Big E" Opens
September	15	MCTA Annual Meeting Belchertown, MA
September	21	Exotic Fir Day Downey's Nurseries Hatley, Quebec, Canada
	22	NH/VT Christmas Tree Assoc Annual Meeting Cookshire-Eaton, Canada
October	6	Connecticut Fall Meeting Maple Row Eaton, CT

ORGANIZATION & INDUSTRY NEWS

Welcome to our newest MCTA members, Henry Sirignano of Middleboro, Richard & Cindy Miller of North Attleboro, Alex Lyon of Franklin and Gigi Desautels of Boylston, MA.

Twilight Meetings: A special "Thank you" goes out to Greg Davagian and family in Sutton, Bill & Julie Gauld in Sterling and Crystal Card and her son in Billerica for being hosts of the 2012 twilight meetings. The meetings were informative, interactive and well attended. Meals were served and farm tours were enjoyed

We have a few NEW additions to our Big E exhibits. thanks to Seth Cranston. He built three full size Christmas caricatures where children and adults can take candid photo's. Our Frosty the Snowman will hold a sign with the MCTA logo and a "QR" code. Visitors will be able to capture the "QR "code on their phones. This takes them directly to the "Win a Free Christmas Tree" contest entry, located on our website. The caricatures will be also be used and placed at local fairs during the fair season, including Topsfield fair and others. Small potted trees and mulch around the base of the 10' tree. The NECTA tree and wreath display will remain in location for this year. Stop in at the exhibits!

Tweet Tweet. Our great ally, Rick Leblanc in the Dept of Agricultural Resource, is working on sending short "Tweets" regarding farm events across the state. Have you Google'd your farm lately? A congratulations goes to Seth Cranston and Cranston's Tree Farm for their winning photo in the Mass Agricultural Calendar Contest. Look for the photo in the 2013 edition.

Reminder for email address: If you have not registered an email address with the association please take a few minutes to send it to Dave Morin at: info@arrowheadacres.com

Pitching In. Thank you ahead of time for all those who volunteer their time in helping the MCTA with the events and tasks throughout the year. From the Big E booth, to setting up tables to stuffing envelopes we are grateful for helping hands. We are lucky to have a

FARM PHOTO'S WANTED

Got some great farm photos? Cindy Cranston is looking for Massachusetts Christmas tree f arm photos for the "BIG E" exhibit booth and for the MCTA website. All farm activities welcomed.

Bring them to the ANNUAL Meeting!.

10 ft. Christmas Tree Needed

For The"Big E" Exhibit

Stipend of **$100.00**

Contact: John Coward
(413) 569-6724

M.C.T.A. OFFICERS August 1, 2011 - July 31, 2012

PRESIDENT *(2 year term expires July 2012)*
Thomas Cranston
197 Bellus Road, P.O. Box 77
Ashfield, MA 01330
(413) 628-3911
tcranston@verizon.net

VICE-PRESIDENT *(2 year term expires 2012)*
Rob Leab
3475 Route 43, Hancock, MA 01237
(413) 738-5915
missy@iokavalleyfarm.com

TREASURER- (*1 year term limit)*
Joseph Meichelbeck - Grafton, MA
(508) 839-6739
jrm44@verizon.net

SECRETARY (*No term limit)*
Julie Gauld
P.O. Box 242, Sterling, MA 01564
(978) 365-5818
bandjevergreen@gmail.com

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Casey Vandervalk- Mendon, MA *(2 yr term expires 2012)*
(508) 473-7418
vandervalk@comcast.net

DIRECTORS

David Butt - Haverhill, MA *(1st term expires . 2012)*
(978) 372-9474
turkeyhillfarm@comcast.net

James Colburn- Merrimac, MA *(2nd term expires. 2013)*
(978) 346-4381
jas.colburn@verizon.net

Seth Cranston-Ashfield, MA *(1st term expires 2014)*
(413) 628-0090
cranstonstreefarm@verizon.net

Greg Davagian- Sutton, MA *(1st Term expires .2013)*
(508) 865-3413
davatrees@gmail.com

Larry Flaccus- Shelburne, MA *(1st term expires 2014)*
2014 (413) 625-6116
farm@kenburnorchards.com

Joyce Leitl- Belchertown, MA *(1st term expires .2013)*
(413) 289-1771
joyceleitl@hotmail.com

David Morin –Email Manager *(2nd term expires 2013)*
(508) 278-5017
info@arrowheadacres.com

Carol Nims – Greenfield, MA *(2nd term expires 2012)*
(413) 772-6334
nimstreefarm@verizon.net

Daniel Pierce Lunenburg, MA *(1st term expires .2012)*
(978) 582-4723
piercetrees@verizon.net

David Radebaugh- Belchertown,MA . *(2nd term expires 2013)*
(413) 323-5270
xmasstrees19@yahoo.com

Gloria Ellsworth- Northborough, Ma "Shearings" Editor
(508) 393-6479
shearings2u@verizon.net

Organization & Industry News continued

Drought and deluge: Like all farmers across the states, we too experience the heart break in the toil of our labor when mother nature decides to change her direction. Losses will come, maybe in greater numbers this year due to the unpredictable weather and heat. Challenges for our saleable trees and lack of transplant viability will affect us all. But, like most farmers, we endure the good with the bad , and have each other to compare and console our woes at the annual meeting.

NATIONAL News:

After the NCTA directors meeting in Texas it was agreed upon that the organization should take a different tack based on the Check-off program. It is still presumed that the Check-off will be passed into law once the upcoming presidential election is over with.

When this happens the work of the NCTA will change. The Check-off board will take care of the marketing and research of the real tree.

The NCTA will move solely into protection and policy, which are areas that the Check-off money cannot be used for. The NCTA will be looking at fire protection, chemical use and government policies that affect the tree industry.

This change will keep a necessary arm of the organization while letting the marketing and research be funded through the Check-off

To find more facts on Check-off programs, the benefits, and how they are governed & overseen. go to www.mcta.org.

Obituaries **Martha Rudd**

Martha Rudd, a 30 year NHVTCTA member, passed away recently. She owned and operated Rudd's Tree Farms in Pownal, Vt., For twenty years she ran the farm after her husband, Bob, passed in 1991. Rudd's Tree Farm, eventually specializing in Fraser Firs, won over 35 awards at the Vermont Farm Show and Eastern States Exposition over the years. Rudd's farm had 2 Grand Champion at the Big E over the years.

M.C.T.A ANNUAL MEETING 2012

Saturday

September 15, 2012

RADEBAUGH TREE FARM

191 Franklin Street
Belchertown, MA

Host: Dave & Diane Radebaugh

Guest Speaker : Dr. Richard Cowles (Pesticide Credits offered)

Dave Radebaugh works his farm as a full time occupation. He has been selling trees since 1971. Belchertown is our second farm. The first tree was planted in 1987 and started selling trees in 1992. Currently, they grow Fraser fir, Blue Spruce Concolor fir and a few White Pine, Cannan fir and Turkish fir. Dave uses transplant beds for all his seedlings then transitions them into the field in a year or two. He has approximately 12,000-14,00 trees in the ground. Farm challenges include scale and mite issues and grass/weed control on hilly, rocky land. He has had difficulty with drawing in new customers to his location and has more trees than he can sell. An updated website offers coupons over the last few selling season to help draw new customers. He has an abundance of large trees and prefers to sell his trees Choose & Cut. He makes the majority of his own fresh green products .

Cost:			
Members:	$ 20.	Per person	Lunch included, Fee non-refundable (NH/VT, RI, CT ,ME and NY Association Members included)
Non-Members:	$ 30.	Per Person	(fee non-refundable)
Registration:		8:00 am -9:00 am	Coffee & Pastries
MCTA Business Meeting		9:00 am – 10: 30	Tom Cranston
		10:30am – 12:00	Dr. Richard Cowles, Entomologist from Connecticut Experimental Station with host: Dave Radebaugh
Lunch		12:00 – 12:30	BRING YOUR OWN CHAIR (s)
Question & Answers		12:45 pm	Host : Dave Radebaugh

- Members welcomed to bring items for sale or trade -

Directions:

From Mass Pike East or West: Take exit 8 (Palmer), go left on Rte 32. Then take first left on Shearer St., go to end. Take right on to Franklin St. (Rte 181). Go 6.2 miles. Radebaugh Tree Farm is on the left

From North West: Take Rte 2 to Rte 202 South to Belchertown Center. Take Rte 181 South. Farm is 3 miles on left. Farm Phone: (413) 323-5270

MASSACHUSETTS CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION
BUDGET REPORT 2011-2013

	2011	2012	2013	
	Actual	Estimate	Budget	Change
Receipts				
Membership	$ 7,680	$ 7,680	$ 7,860	$ 180
Meetings	38	980	1,200	$ 220
Advertising/Marketing	1,441	1,000	1,100	$ 100
Interest	216	278	100	$ (178)
Apparel/Misc.	1,175	186	100	$ (86)
Total	$ 10,550	$ 10,124	$ 10,360	$ 236
Disbursements				-
Marketing	$ 649	$ 2,178	$ 2,400	$ 222
Secretary	154	150	150	$ -
Meetings	1,854	2,600	2,600	$ -
Dues/Subscr.	3,538	3,500	3,760	$ 260
Printing/Postage	1,170	1,300	200	$ (1,100)
Travel	1,000		-	$ -
Stipends	1,650	1,650	1,650	$ -
Misc		100		$ (100)
Total	$ 10,015	$ 11,478	$ 10,760	$ (718)
Surplus/Deficit	$ 535	$ (1,354)	$ (400)	$ 954
Cash Balances-1				
Start	$ 40,039	$ 40,574	$ 39,220	$ (1,354)
End	$ 40,574	$ 39,220	$ 38,820	$ (400)
	Note: includes 131 members for 2013			

June 2012 Twilight Meeting Highlights

Failure to Control Brush in Christmas Trees will be Costly

Authored by Dr. John F. Ahrens Emeritus Plant Scientist
Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station.
Reprinted from the Real tree line Vol 51 No. 3 August 2011.

We can define "brush" in Christmas trees as any woody perennial plant that invades the plantation. "Brush" may include all of the tree species as well as the wood vines such as poison ivy (Taxicodendron radicans), Oriental bittersweet (Celastrus orbiculatus), Virgina creeper (Parthenocissus quenquefolia) and several others. All of these can become serious weeks and poison ivy can create a health problem for workers and, in choose-and-cut plantations, the unsuspecting public.

Woody plants may develop from seeds which are often spread by birds or by wind, from pieces of root or from stump sprouts. Sooner or later every plantation in New England will become infested with woody invaders. Conifers are rarely a problem, because they will not re-sprout when cut off at the soil line.

However, failure to control deciduous brush annually can reap severe consequences. What is a small problem the first season becomes a much greater problem in the second season and beyond. Woody growth the first year may only be 12" to 18" tall and easy to control. In the second or later years, seasonal growth of woody species may be 3' to 4' or more, and much more difficult to control. It would require broadcast rather than band applications of herbicides, directed basal sprays in oil or costly mechanical removal.

Unfortunately, most of the pre-emergence herbicides, applied in the spring in Christmas tree plantations, do not control woody growth plants that may start later in the season or are protected from the herbicides by growing close to the conifer stems. Only flumioxazin (SureGurard) "Sulfometuron Plus hexazinone" and Weststar) The hexazinone in Westar controls some established woody plants but the rates used are too low to control most woody species.

I remember too well, a Christmas tree grower who had excellent results with spring-applied Simazine and atrazine to control perennial grasses and most annual weeds. Invading gray and white birch were uncontrolled and ignored, however, and soon became so tall that costly cutting was necessary. Then, to do a thorough job and prevent re-sprouting, it was necessary to treat the stumps. All told, this could have been avoided if treatments were made while the invading trees were small.

The two main herbicides that control deciduous woody plants, and are registered for Christmas trees, are Roundup (glyphosate) and Garlon 3A (triclopyramine). Both are effective at 1 $^{1/3}$ to 2 quarts per acre. And, at these rates, are tolerated by true firs and spruces early in fall, usually between Labor Day and September 15, when these conifers have matured and "hardened off". Spot treatment rates of Roundup and Garlon 3A are 1 $^{1/3}$ ounces per gallon.

Most effective results in early fall are obtained before senescence of the woody plants. That is, deciduous leaves lose their normal green color and become yellow or reddish. Also, to be effective, these herbicides must be applied before a killing frost, which makes many deciduous leaves shed.

Roundup has become the standard fall herbicide because it controls not only woody plants, but also most perennial grasses, as well as most winter annual, biennial and perennial plants. However, Garlon 3A has an advantage over Roundup in some instances. Early season (late spring or early summer) directed applications of Roundup may kill the tops of woody plants but not the roots, so directed

continued

Brush control continued

applications of Garlon 3A in May or June can be more effective. Garlon 3A is effective when deciduous growth is in full leaf in late May and June, whereas Roundup is most effective on brush in August or early September. Garlon also is more effective than Roundup in controlling Oriental bittersweet at any time and Garlon does not kill grasses, whereas Roundup does.

Why even think about brush control in May, June or July, when conifers are more tolerant in early fall, and with spruce and true firs, you can then spray without fear of injuring them. One reason is that vines can deform Christmas trees if they are allowed to grow all season. Using a directed spray in June can prevent the problem. Sometimes, growers pull out the vines, laying them on the ground and spraying them with Garlon or Roundup. With poison ivy, it may be best to spray in late spring, before the twining begins to avoid personal contact with the poisonous plant.

Vetches and the twinning bindweed can deform Christmas trees if not removed early in the growing season.

Directed sprays of amine formulations of 2,4-D , also are effective in controlling poison ivy and a few other woody plants, such as willows and wild cherry. It is best to avoid the ester formulations of 2,4-D because they can be volatile and injure Christmas trees, especially during hot weather.

Although they are not woody plants, it is worth repeating her that vetches and the twining bindweed can deform Christmas trees if not removed early in the growing season. There are two bindweed species: hedge bindweed (Convolvulus sepium) and field bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis) commonly and mistakenly called morning glory by many growers. Both twine around conifers and can deform the leaders. Vetches of several species do the same. In my backyard plantation, I found Goal 2XL at 2/3 oz (2 tablespoons) per gallon of water plus Stinger at ½ teaspoon per gallon of water in June, kills vetch and bindweed tops and prevents the deformation. The bindweeds are not killed to the roots, but the damage to the trees is prevented without injury to the true firs, Douglas fir or White pine.

I have mentioned in a previous article in The Real Tree Line that there are now over 40 formulations of glyphosate. In research conducted over many years ago, we found that Roundup Original was safe to spray over spruces and true firs in the fall, at the rates given above. Other new formulations contain different surfactants or different concentrations of surfactant, which can make them more toxic to conifers. Although Roundup Original is no longer readily available, equivalent formulations under different names such as Glystar, Credit, Glyfos and Glyphosate 4.

Dr. John Ahrens, Plant Scientist Connecticut Experimental Station.

Dollars & Sense $

Your Bank Deposits Might Put You At Risk

Reprinted from V.T. Connelly, Director of government relations Maryland Farm Bureau and FB news.

If your farm operation deals in cash transactions, you will want to consider the nightmare that two Maryland farm families experienced before making your next

Last year, federal Treasury Department investigations showed up at the home of Calvin and Debbie Taylor, owners of Taylor's Produce in Preston, MD. The investigators asked a series of questions, allowed the Taylors to provide details about activity at their fresh produce stands and then informed them that the government already had seized their entire bank account because of suspicious deposits.

The government took all $90,000. Of the operating cash in the Taylor's account because they had made repeated deposits of just under $ 10,000.

The same situation played out last month in Frederick County, MD. This time the target was Randy Sowers, owner of South Mountain Creamery. The government seized almost $ 70,000., but claims the Sowers' repeated deposits of under $ 10,000. Amounted to more than $ 250,000 last year.

Many farmers and most other business people know that making deposits or withdrawals of over $10,000 triggers a Currency Transaction Report (CTR) to the IRS. What most of us do not know is that purposely depositing less than $10,000 to avoid triggering the CTR is a crime called structuring.

These deposits trigger a form called the Suspicious Activity Report (SAR), which the bank must file without informing the customer.

Most people understand that the government monitors currency transactions to catch terrorists, drug dealers and money launderers. But when law abiding citizens like the Taylors and the Sowers find themselves the targets of overzealous federal prosecutors, something has gone terribly wrong.

The Taylor's attorney advised them that they would likely be found guilty of "structuring". Instead of proceeding to trial and enduring the cost of the attorney over the duration of the case, they agreed to a civil forfeiture of $42,000 rather than risk a much larger criminal fine and jail time. The Justice Department is now free to use the $42,000 for its own purposes.

The case against the Sowers is just getting underway, but the government has already filed paperwork to keep $62,000 of Randy's money.

The Taylors have settled their case but are very concerned that there are farmers out there like them who don't know that the crime of "structuring" exists. Farm Bureau advises all members to discuss this issue with your accountant, your attorney and possibly your banker. And, by all means, make sure you call an attorney before answering any questions posed by friendly Treasury Investigators who visit your farm.

Maryland Farm Bureau is working with the American Farm Bureau Federation and members of Congress to review the intent and implementation of the "structuring" law. Farm Bureau is looking for ways to ensure farmers do not get caught up in a process that is intended to stop terrorists and organized crime.

"BIG E" VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

Please help support the New England Christmas tree industry by becoming part of the special people needed to man the outdoor and indoor booths during The Big E. We need display trees for show, pruning, and boughs for wreath making and any demonstration talents you can provide.

September 14 – September 30

NECTA Outdoor Booth Contact
Abby Tonry
324 Exeter Rd,
Hampton Falls, NH 03844
(603) 772-6213 o r Eve. (603) 772-2724

Email to: abbytonry@hotmail.com

MCTA Indoor Booth Contact

John Coward
13 Congamond Road
Southwick, MA 01077
(413) 569-6724

E-Mail Address: jcow65@msn.com

THE BIG E VOLUNTEER SHEET

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE # (_____) _____ Email: _____

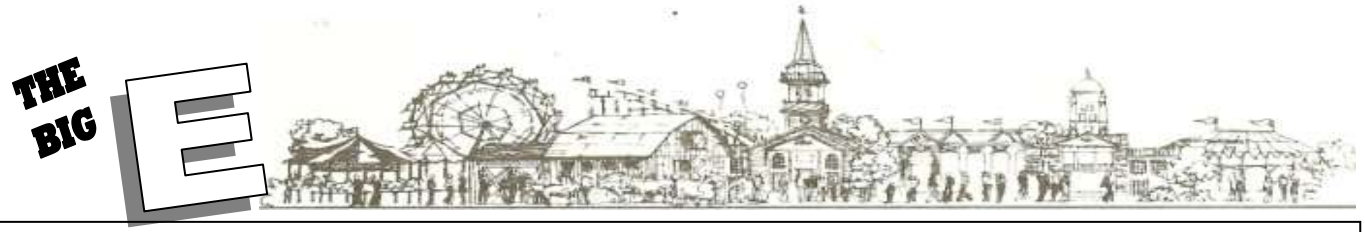
I would like to work at the : _____ NECTA Outdoor Booth _____ MCTA Indoor Booth

	1st Choice	2nd Choice
September	_____,	September _____
	_____ 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.	_____
	_____ 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.	_____
	_____ Help Set up – Thursday, September 13	
	_____ Help Take-down – Monday, October 1	

Number of working adults _____ I can demonstrate how to: _____

Emails are appreciated over phone calls.

*If you cannot meet your scheduled obligation, please contact another tree grower to replace you.



Christmas Tree and Wreath Contests 2012

Brought you by N.E.C.T.A & the Big E

Eligibility: Open to All New England Growers & Wreath Makers-Decorators

Entry Deadline: Thursday, September 13

Judging is on September 13th

General Tree Contest Rules: **Tree Classes:** Pine, Spruce & Fir

1. Farms may enter a maximum of three (3) trees. One (1) tree per tree class.
   No flocked, colored or sprayed trees allowed. Tree handle must be trimmed and 6"-9" long.
2. Trees must have TWO (2) waterproof shipping tags attached to butt, with name & address
3. Tree (s) entered for prize money must be from 6' to 9' from tip to butt
4. Tip lengths must be appropriate for tree taper

   ≈ **Deliver all entries to: Mallary Complex Rotunda between 8 am – 12 noon** ≈

General Wreath Contest Rules: **Wreath Classes**: Plain and Decorated

1. Two (2) entries permitted. One for each class
2. Wreaths to be made with natural conifer greens, holly and/or Laurel or assorted greens
3. Constructed on a 10" or 12" ring.
4. Attached ID tag with name and address to wreath (s)

Other Size Trees and Wreaths Welcomed for Display Only

Show Prizes

Christmas Trees: Grand Champion Prize : Includes a additional $50 premium

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
$ 85.	$ 70.	$ 60.	$ 50.	$ 45.	$ 45.	$ 45.

Decorated Wreaths

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
$ 55.	$ 45.	$ 40.	$ 30.	$ 25.	$ 25.	$ 25.

Plain Wreaths

1st	2nd	3rd	4th
$ 55.	$ 45.	$ 40.	$ 30.

For more information on how to enter or detailed "Tree and Wreath Contest Rules" go to: www.thebige.com or contact John Coward, the show superintendent at (413) 569-6724

Inform Yourself about Herbicide- Resistant Weeds

By Meghan Baker and Reprinted from Limbs & Needles Vol. 39, No.1 Spring 2012.

For producers of a multi-year perennial crop, herbicides are an invaluable tool in managing the productivity of Christmas tree plantations. Herbicides allow control of competing weeds that are seeking the same water and nutrients that trees demand. Some weeds can negatively affect tree growth and shape by shading out and growing into trees in the field.

Most tree growers have been successfully avoiding weed issues by managing undesirable weeds with chemical mowing systems. By using low rates of Roundup, this weed management system encourages the spread of nitrogen-supplying clovers that help keep fertilizer inputs down, while also creating a sustainable groundcover that protects soil and provides habitat for beneficial insects.

Unfortunately, there is no perfect weed management system. There are some weed species that don't respond as expected when we spray Roundup - - even when full rates are applied. Environmental conditions, attention to proper calibration and application rates, and the growth stage of the targeted weed control. There are increasing issues with herbicide-tolerance among certain weed populations, most notably with glyphosate (Roundup and other products) . Most weed scientists point to the widespread production of Roundup Ready crops, which have greatly increased the quantity of glyphosate-tolerant weed populations. Glyphosate-resistant weed populations are a current concern in cotton, corn, and soybean fields in the Midwest, but there have been issues here in North Carolina. Glyphosate-tolerant populations can appear in any cropping system.

Weed scientists point to three main factors that are responsible for glyphosate-tolerance: the biology of the weed, the frequency of herbicide use, and the application rates. With the repeated and widespread use of low rates of glyphosate employed in Christmas tree production, it's important to recognize that workers and growers need to pay attention to potential herbicide-resistant populations. The weather, growth stage of that plant, and human error can certainly affect how well a herbicide treatment works. However, if all these factors were ideal and a weed doesn't respond, herbicide-tolerance should be investigated. Here are two potential candidates for herbicide-tolerance that we should be mindful of , in the tree field.

Common Lambsquarters (Chenopodium album), is a summer annual in the Goosefoot family, which also includes our familiar edible beets and spinach. While lambsquarter's leaves are edible, the plant can become a troublesome weed in the field. This erect plant can reach up to six feet in height and can produce more than 70,000 seeds in one plant. These seeds have remarkable longevity, being able to retain dormant in the soil for several decades and still be viable. Stems can be very stout and difficult to work around once they are mature and often persist well into winter.

The leaves of Lambsquarters are alternate and are covered on the top and bottom with what looks like a white, fuzzy, mealy substance that, in part, helps repel materials that are sprayed onto leaf surfaces. There are increasing problems with herbicide-resistant populations of Lambsquarters, though cases have been reported since the 1970's. Several states have reported observable degrees of glyphosate resistance in Lambsquarters populations, particularly in Roundup Ready crops grown in the Midwest. The potential for the spread of the

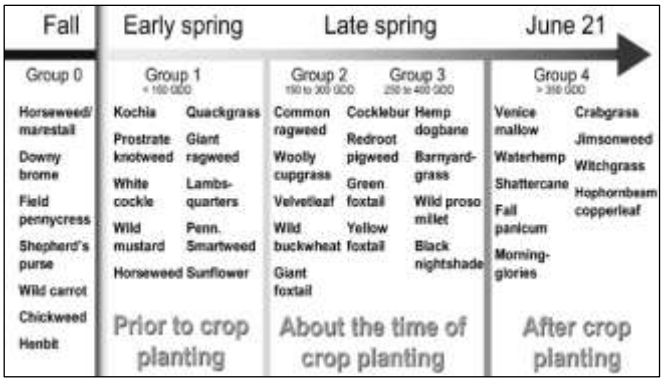
Continued to page 14

Continued from page 13

glyphosate-resistance gene is a concern, especially since this weed is so ubiquitous in fields and disturbed areas across North America particularly in Roundup Ready crops grown in the Midwest. The potential for the spread of the glyphosate-resistance gene is a concern, especially since this weed is so ubiquitous in fields and disturbed areas across North America.

Horseweed, (Conyza Canadensis) is another problem weed that can fit the lifecycle of either a summer or winter annual, usually reaching a maximum height of 6 feet. Leaves are alternate and become smaller in size as they reach the top of the plant. Glyphosate resistant horseweed populations were first documented in 2000, and fourteen states now report control issues with horseweed. The high germination rates of horseweed seeds and the ability of the seed to be wind-dispersed over significant distances have led to a concern over rapid migration of glyphosate resistant populations. Horseweed can produce viable and plentiful seed populations even in unfavorable drought conditions. Even more disturbing, a single plant can produce up to 200,000 seeds.

These two weeds are problematic in the tree field due to their size, which can create shearing hazards and interfere with the growth of young trees. The potential for out-competing commercial crops is significant. Herbicide-resistant weed populations are considered to e low; however, the occurrence of resistant weed populations is increasing dramatically.



With the low rates of Roundup that are utilized in chemical mowing in tree fields there can be an increased risk of allowing rogue weed specimens to develop a level of resistance that, over time, can become an observable trait in weed populations.

This does not mean that chemical mowing is a risky practice, as it is undeniably a valuable asset in the tree grower's weed management toolkit.
When employed properly, the practice reduces problem weeds and encourages nitrogen-fixing clover. The take-home message is that glyphosate-resistant weed populations exist across the country and have been documented in North Carolina. The Weed Science Society of America lists nine weed species with confirmed resistance to glyphosate: certain strains of common ragweed (Ambrosia artemisiifolia), common waterhemp (Amaranthus rudis), giant ragweed (Ambrosia trifida), hairy fleabane (Conyza bonariensis), horseweed (Conyza Canadensis) , Italian ryegrass (Lolium multiflorum), johnsongrass (Sorghum halepense), Palmer amaranth (Amaranthus palmeri), and rigid ryegrass (Lolium rigidum).

One of the tactics to preventing more issues with resistant weeds is to rotate herbicides – something that may need to be further explored in Christmas tree production system. There are several other herbicides in the grower arsenal that can be used effectively to control these and other problem weeds.

No weed management system is completely foolproof. Our task as agricultural professionals and growers is to take as many steps as possible to prevent these agricultural monsters from spreading in the first place.

For more information on herbicide-resistant weeds visit: http://www. weedscience.org/usa/state Meghan Baker is an agricultural extension agent in Watauga County, North Carolina.

Shearing Techniques for Fraser Fir

Reprinted from Limbs&Needles Volume 37,No.4 Winter 2010
Article By Eric Hinesley, Earl Deal, and Buddy Deal

Two things make the Christmas Tree industry what it is today: plantations and shearing. In the early years, non-sheared Fraser fir trees were harvested from wild stands growing on isolated mountaintops in western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia. Later, production shifted to plantations well below elevation of natural stands, and shearing was adopted. As time went by, tree density progressively increased, resulting in trees that are quite dense and heavy, often looking like inverted ice cream cones.

There are many ideas about the best way to shear Christmas trees, including Fraser fir. A pioneer in shearing research was Barney Douglass in the Pacific Northwest. After testing many methods, he concluded it was best to shear Noble fir with knives soon after cessation of shoot elongation in mid-summer (July and August).

In the early 1990's, experiments were initiated in North Carolina to study growth and quality of Fraser fir in relation to shearing date. Two publications related to that work can be viewed at the NCSU Extension website at www.ces.ncsu.edu/Christmastrees. These studies showed that the best time to shear is in July and August. They also showed that shearing reduced the potential growth of trees by 40% to 55% depending on timing.

There is always demand for some large trees to be used in churches, businesses , large homes etc. Historically, these trees were produced by retaining the lower grade and/or slower growing stragglers from a harvested stand, and continuing to shear them annually until they could be sold. The resulting trees were also very dense and heavy. This management technique is often referred to as "High Grading" in the forestry profession. In effect, the slower growing, poor quality trees have been used to produce the largest trees throughout the Christmas Tree industry.

The value of a tree is determined first by its height and second, by its density. If trees can be "stretched" during shearing (i.e., leave a longer leader), they reach commercial height quicker and/or grow to a taller size in a given number of years. This also yields a tree with a more natural appearance and has other advantages as well, such as less weight per tree, more trees per truck, etc.

We initiated a replicated field experiment in 2001 to look at the effect of leader length on the growth and value of Fraser fir Christmas trees. Spacing was 5 x 5, at a elevation of about 3,500 feet. Shearing begun in 2001 when trees were 3 to 4 feet tall. Each of the nine shearing treatments involved a different leader length or combination of lengths. The range in leader length was 10" to 18". Leader shearing in some treatments stated when the terminal bud cluster was 3 feet above the ground line; in others, after the terminal bud cluster reached 5 feet. From the onset, trees were side sheared in all treatments to control taper. Shearing was done once each year in July or August.

It should be noted that to fairly evaluate the effect of leader length on growth and quality, it was necessary to randomly assign various leader lengths to individual trees. However, in a real Christmas tree operation, this would not be the case; long leaders would be used only on the fastest growing trees with the greatest bud set and natural potential for high density.

Harvesting from the study began in 2005. Approximately equal numbers of trees were

Shearing Techniques continued on page 19

M.C.T.A. MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

July 11, 2012

Southwick , MA: Attendance: Tom Cranston, Rob Leab, Joe Meichelbeck, Cindy Cranston, James Colburn, Greg Davagian, Larry Flaccus, Julie Gauld, Dave Morin, Dan Pierce, Dave Radebaugh, Peter Sweet, Casey Vanderwalk, Seth Cranston and Rick Leblanc of the MA Agricultural Resource Dept.

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President Tom Cranston: The minutes of the May 2012 meeting were approved as printed.
Jo e Meichelbeck reported that the budget and disbursements may be slightly higher.

NECTA Report: John Coward
NECTA Christmas tree and wreath display will remain in the same location. Wreaths will be displayed on the lattice next to the Mallory building. No report on a new building plans.

The " BIG E":
Directors voted to allow a reasonable payment to Seth Cranston for the building of three caricatures for the use at the Big E and local fairs.

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:
Cindy noted that the Check-Off program for Christmas trees is moving forward for the future.

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
Board voted to provide $500 for the MCTA to be included on the September and October MBTA car advertising for Boston local, Fitchburg and Worcester lines. Board approved $300 in support of the 2013 Massachusetts Agricultural calendar. Rick Leblanc will work with the new Commissioner of Agriculture on a tree cutting ceremony at a member farm in the eastern part of the state.

MARKETING: WEBSITE:
Dave Morin reports we already have entrants for this year's free tree contest. The Big E booth will promote the contest as well.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE
Dan Pierce and Dave Butt's 1st terms end in 2012. Dave Butt will be stepping down as a director. Jim Colburn will succeed Julie Gauld as Secretary. The VP position is open once Rob Leab becomes President. New director nominations will be put forward at the Annual Meeting.

TWILIGHT MEETINGS
Suggestion was made to provide transportation to and from farm fields during meetings for people who have difficulty walking or need assistance.

ANNUAL MEETING
Radebaugh' Tree Farm. Belchertown, MA See insert in this Pesticide credit (s) offered.

"SHEARINGS"
Progress on integration of an electronic newsletter is moving along as scheduled. The August issue of "Shearings will be sent via email and hard copy to all members and vendors. Issues will be available on the M.C.T.A. website by Sept. 1. Other state tree associations will receive the on-line version.

MEMBERSHIP
Currently, MCTA has 130 members. Renewals for 2012-2013 are coming in steadily. Survey done by Pete Sweet will be handed out Annual Meeting.

Meeting notes submitted by Julie Gauld MCTA

MAINE CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION
50TH ANNIVERSARY &
NECTA SUMMER/FALL MEETING

Incorporated 1962

September 7- 9, 2012

September 7 & 8, 2012 **Piper Mtn Christmas Trees, 27 Trundy Rd, Newburgh, ME 04444**
September 9, 2012 **Finestkind Tree Farms, 112 Ames Rd, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426**

Friday	**September 7, 2012** :	**Piper Mtn Christmas Trees, Newburgh, ME** Jim & Norma Corliss
6:00pm		Informal Social & Light Refreshments *(BYOB)*
Saturday	**September 8, 2012**	**Piper Mtn Christmas Trees, Newburgh, ME** *(Camping sites available)*
8:30 am	Registration opens. Pre-registration recommended Drinks & snacks	
9:00	MCTA President's welcome Jim Corliss	
9:05	Piper Mountain Farm Welcome & history from Jim & Norma Corliss	
9:15	Intro to vendors and Public Affairs USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services	
9:30	"**Discovering Your Marketing Niche" Catherine Wright Howard** Publisher/Editor, *Christmas Tree Magazine* In this seminar Catherine talks of marketing And a hands-on marketing workshop discover your key selling ideas.	
9:30	**Auxiliary Program**: Managing a Gift shop Anne Corliss & Marcie Gauvin	
11:30 –	Lunch & visit vendors	
1:00 pm	**Piper Mountain Christmas Tree's secrets to Marketing Jim Corliss**	
1:00	Auxiliary **Program**: Tole Painting Christmas Tree Ornaments Shirley Groody	
1:45	**Facebook & Christmas Trees Hunter Smith**	
2:30	**Promises to Possibilities - The CRC story Dr. Rajasekaran R. Lada & Dr. Mason MacDonald:** Canadian Needle retention study, future clone development. Post harvest handling, fire-retardant options. How CRC evolved as a global centre for balsam fir research. Nova Scotia Ag College & University Laval, Christmas Tree Research Center	
3:30	**Christmas Tree Pests** (outdoors, rain/shine) 1 pesticide Credit **Charlene Donahue** Forest Entomologist, Insect & Disease Laboratory Augusta, Me	
4:30	**State/Provincial Association Meetings** Or Farm Tour Piper Mountain Christmas Trees	
5:30	Social	
6:00 pm	**Anniversary Dinner**, *Dress Casual* **Growers Forum** 50th Anniversary Speakers (TBA	
Sunday	**September 9, 2012**	**Finestkind Tree Farms, Dover-Foxcroft, ME**
9:15 am	**Christmas tree soil testing and needle analysis Bill Urbanowicz** Spectrum Analytic Inc, Washington, OH. Basic agronomy training session, needle analysis and how to take a good sample Handout: *Fertilizing Christmas Trees*	
9:15	Auxiliary **Program:** Wreath Decorating Demo	
10:15	**Outdoor Demonstration**, Taking Soil & Plant Tissue Samples **Bill Urbanowicz** **Farm Tour Finestkind Tree Farms** *(after above demo)*	
11:30	Lunch - Ham, Beans, Salad, Roll & Dessert-	
12:45 pm	**Farm Tour Finestkind Tree Farms Duane & Joy LaCasce**	
12:45	Auxiliary Program: Centerpiece Decorating Demo	
4:00	Meeting end.	

Maine Christmas Tree Association's 50th Anniversary Meeting

REGISTRATION FORM

Saturday September 8, 2012 Piper Mtn Christmas Trees- Newburgh, ME 04444
Sunday September 9, 2012 Finestkind Tree Farms, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

Business Name: _____ Your Name: _____

Business Address: _____ List additional attendees names: _____

Business Telephone: _____ Email: _____

On-Site Registration One Day or Both Days

One Day Only (Sat or Sun) *(Circle one)* Two Days : SAT & SUN

_____ Attendees: @ $ 50.00 or $ 72.00 = _____

Please Pre-register for Meals:

Saturday. . . . . _____ Lunch @ $ 11.50 = _____

Saturday. . . . . _____ Dinner @ $ 17.50 = _____

Sunday . . . . . _____ Lunch @ $ 12.50 = _____

Please indicate if any meals should be vegetarian : _____

Please Preregister for Auxiliary Program:

Saturday Tole Painting _____ @ $ 5.00 ea = _____

Total Enclosed : _____

Mail Completed form & payment *(make check out to MCTA)* to:
Jane Rice, MCTA Exec Treasurer, 192 Bowie Hill Rd, Durham, ME 04222

Shearing Techniques continued from page 15

removed annually from each treatment to maintain adequate growing space for residual trees. About 200 of the original 660 trees were still present after 2008; the tallest were 14' to 15'. The height and USDA grade of each tree in the study were recorded each year beginning in 2005. Fresh weight and basal stem diameter was recorded for each tree harvested in 2008 and 2009. Average wholesale value ($) per tree was calculated for each shearing treatment (2005 to 2008) assuming the stand was clear-cut in 2008.

Observations and Conclusions

Long leaders are useful only where tree vigor is good and bud set is adequate. If trees are stressed by drought, or if soil fertility and pH are off the mark, growth and bud set will diminish and long leaders will not be an option.

There is a huge variation among trees sheared alike. Shearing techniques that employ long leaders should be applied only to the trees of the highest vigor and density. Given good growing conditions and vigorous trees, the best trees normally are evident by the time they reach 3' to 4' in height. If a tree is destined to be grown to a height of 10' or more, there is little need to clip the leader before the tree reaches a height of 4 to 5 feet. However, side shearing may be needed as early as 3' tall to maintain narrow taper in fields with close spacing. Short leaders (10" to 12") result in more "horns" or off center tops left at lengths over 12 inches. Short leaders generally have fewer buds, and therefore are less dominant over those limbs that can form "horns". In this study, the optimum leader length was 16 inches.

Long leaders (16" to 18") yielded taller trees – a plus, but average USDA grade tended to decrease – a negative. Looking at the extremes, 95% of trees sheared with 10" leaders were grade 1 or premium, compared to 42% for 18" leaders. However, average height of trees with 10" leaders was 8.9 ' compared to 12.2 ' for 18 inch leaders.

Obviously, there is a tradeoff between larger trees

Continued to page 20

There are risks associated with long leaders.

First, bud set and growth must be good; otherwise, crown density will be sparse.

Second, long leaders increase the risk from factors such as late frost and hail storms. These events, which occur once or twice a decade in western North Carolina, can lead to gaps or distinct changes in crown density, which can greatly reduce USDA grade. These could actually make the tree a cull.

Third, if a long leader is used over a period of years, changing to a shorter leader length might result in "shoulders" in the upper crown. This change in leader lengths could cause the tree to have uneven density, making it a cull. It becomes even more difficult to prevent "shoulders" when switching to 10" and 12" leaders as the tree ages and becomes taller. Finally, trees occasionally produce heavy cone crops, and the reduction in USDA grade will likely be worse in trees with long leaders.

Continued to page 21

Shearing Techniques continued

of lower grade versus smaller trees of higher average grade. Despite having a lower average USDA grade, the average wholesale value of harvested trees with 16" and 18" leaders was more than twice the value of trees with 10" and 12" leaders. Thus, the average gain in height more than compensated for the average loss in grade.

At first, we thought long leaders would yield taller trees with less weight and smaller trunk diameters compared to trees grown with shorter leaders. The opposite occurred; trees with 16" and 18" leaders had the largest trunk diameters, and were almost 50% heavier than trees sheared with 10" and 12" leaders. They were also 3 feet taller, but had a lower average grade. Please note that these generalizations are for trees harvested at the same age, not the same height. If the comparisons were based on equal height rather than age, it is likely that stretched tress would have less weight because they would have reached a given height in fewer years.

Our ad in the May issue of "Shearings" incorrectly stated that our Beneke Rotary Pruners were sold with a Dolmar LT-210 engine. Actually, this engine along with many other 2-cycle engines has been discontinued.

We are now using the Tanaka TCG 22 engine, but other 2-cycle engines will work as well if they have a trigger assembly, a counterclockwise drive, and will receive a 3/16" FLEX drive shaft.

CALL 1-800-477-8637 TODAY FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO ORDER A BENEKE ROTARY PRUNER

Shearing Techniques continued from page 20

Using two shearing systems within a stand creates some additional inconvenience and expense compared to standard shearing. Because select trees might reach a height of 8' to 9' in a rotation compared to 6' -7' for the average tree, the men shearing the trees might have to carry additional equipment such as short-handled pole pruners to reach the upper whorl and leader. There is also the expense and inconvenience of marking selected trees. Finally, when harvesting begins, the marking process is more challenging because the grower must be careful to maintain adequate growing space for selected trees.

We feel the best way to implement these findings is to select the best trees early in the rotation in fields a with optimum terrain (flat is better). The best trees, rather than the worst can then be sheared to achieve a greater size than other trees in the stand. This is not a technique to use in all stands and all sites. A grower should know his market for big trees, and adjust accordingly.

Remember, this approach is possible only if trees have a good bud set and vigor. By identifying the best trees early and sharing them with longer leaders, a grower can take advantage of their greater growth potential. This study and some additional field experience has shown that 16" is the target leader length on select Fraser fir trees in the mountains of North Carolina. This length captures most of the potential growth (compared to non-sheared trees) and value.

It is less risky than 18" leaders and yields a higher percentage (65% vs. 42%) of premium and No. 1 trees.

In the forestry profession, holding the best trees for the final harvest is called "Thinning From Below". In most Christmas tree operations, a stand is harvested over three years. To maximize gain, stretched trees should be harvested late in the cutting cycle. Combined with better genetic shock, we can believe it can produce larger trees faster, lower production costs of this size tree and increase revenue for growers.

In the "real world" of growing large Christmas trees, we have found that the use of white coat hangers is a good way to identify selected trees. Although trees can be marked by any of several means, the chosen method should not be too labor intensive, or interfere with shearing. White coat hangers work well because they contrast with the green trees. Further, they can easily be removed for shearing, and replaced higher on the tree after shearing. If a selected tree lags or deteriorates in quality during the rotation, simply remove the coat hanger, and resume shearing it like the other trees in the stand. After the select trees have been sheared for three years, they are distinctly taller than surrounding trees, and hangers are no longer needed.

M.C.T.A. Annual Meeting 2012

Got something to sell?

Members are welcomed to bring items "For Sale" to meeting

Equipment- Shop Goods- Assorted Farm items

Buy-Sell or Trade

CHRISTMAS TREE RESOURCES

Massachusetts Dept of Agriculture:
www.mass.gov/agr

Umass Extension Service
extension.umass.edu/agriculture

Soil Testing Lab:
Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Lab
West Experiment Station
682 North Pleasant St.
UMass, Amherst, MA 01003
(413)545-2311 fax: (413)545-1931
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,
rprostak@umext.umass.edu

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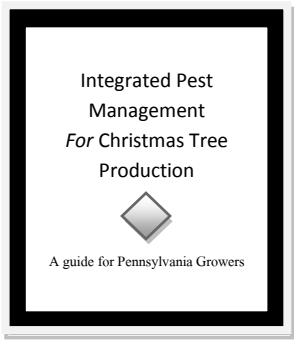

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(specify publication AGRS-117 on the order form).
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Full Page (8" x 10")	$ 82.50	$300. 00
Half Page (8" x 4 ¾") Horizontal	$ 44.00	$ 158.40
Quarter Page (3 ¾" x 4 ¾")	$ 27.50	$ 99.00
Business Card (3 ¾" x 2 ¼")	$ 18.00	$ 64.80
Classified Ads – Non members	Priced per word	Priced per photo
Classified Ads – *MCTA Members*	*Free*	25 Words w/contact info
	BUY - SELL - TRADE	Small photo's allowed

For more information and details please contact: *Gloria Ellsworth* (508) 393-6479 Email to: Shearings2u@verizon.net

Submission Deadlines
- Jan. 15 (February Issue)
- April 15 (May Issue)
- July 15 (August Issue)
- Oct. 15 (November Issue)

"Shearings" Editor 2012
Gloria Ellsworth
246 School Street
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