



Spring Has Sprung



Chris Nicholson

Spring is finally here! I think that we as growers are the only group of people who are happy to have a chilly and wet spring. The chilly weather has allowed me to catch up on my chores at the farm without having to battle the hot weather that seems to stress my transplants. Everywhere I go I hear people complaining about this chilly and wet season, but my heart lies with my fellow growers who rely on days like these.

I hope you filled out your paperwork for the choose and cut guide and website listing. Last year we saw a huge jump in web hits to our site. A listing in the guide and website is the best deal in town, I hope you have taken advantage of it.

As you will read in this issue, our twilight and summer meetings have been planned. We also have finalized the plans for the winter meeting of 2015. Planning well in advance allows us to put together informative meetings that are a pleasure to attend. I hope you all can take time to be with us for all of these well planned events.

The tree contest is almost finalized for Early August, are you our next NJ Grand Champion? You may very well be the next champion, but only if you take the time and effort to enter a tree. Donna Cole will be sending out the notices for this and all of the other events very soon so don't delay your response.

Our membership list appears to be on a pace to match that of last year. A few farms have been sold off and are no longer in business, but a few have also sprung up and decided to join us and become members. If you know anyone who is growing and selling trees but does not belong to our group, I ask you to give them the details about joining us. All of our efforts to promote our industry should be supported by all who benefit from it. We had a

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Governor Signs Bill to Update the Farmland Assessment Program

By: Rick Suydam

On April 15, 2013 the bill (S-589/A-3090) that is summarized below became law when it was signed by Governor Christie. The new provisions in the bill will be applicable commencing in tax year 2015.

New Jersey Farm Bureau was the voice for agriculture throughout the legislative process to enact changes to the farmland assessment program, working with legislative sponsors to ensure that the rules for maintaining farmland assessment continued to allow for productive farmland to qualify. Farm Bureau was an important counterweight to voices seeking drastic changes to the farmland assessment program such as: disqualifying lands where agriculture is not the primary use (i.e. business parks with large tracts leased to farmers), means testing, and higher minimum income thresholds that could impact those who farm lower value products (woodlots, grazing lands, oats etc.), and an increase to a ten year rollback. Without Farm Bureau at the table, changes to the law could have been put in place that would have negatively impacted farmers in the state, particularly those that lease large amounts of land or those whose primary income is not from the farm business.

This is but one example of a key agricultural issue on which NJFB takes a leading role. Our staff is always available to answer members' questions about farmland assessment and other important issues (i.e. Right to Farm; farmland preservation). We also work to promote what New Jersey Farmers produce through grants and other initiatives. NJFB is working on behalf of production agriculture every day! If you are not a member of New Jersey Farm Bureau, we would respectfully ask that you please consider becoming a member today by calling 609-393-7163 or visiting us online at www.njfb.org!

What follows is a full summary of the key components of the pending changes to the farmland assessment program, effective in tax year 2015:

Role of the Division of Taxation, State Board and Department of Agriculture

- Calls on the Department of Agriculture and State Board of Agriculture to prepare and adopt a document outlining "generally accepted farming practices". This is to be done "in consultation" with the Division of Taxation. The document is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. A plain language recitation of these guidelines must be provided to assessors in order that they may be used to determine a parcel's active devotion to agriculture/horticulture.
- Additionally, the bill authorizes the Division of Taxation, in consultation with the State Board and NJDA, to offer advice to assist tax assessors in determining whether or not a particular parcel should qualify for farmland assessment based on the agricultural and horticultural activities taking place on the parcel. This advice would be offered verbally, and would not be in writing.



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Governor Signs Bill

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Minimum Income Requirement

- Increases the minimum income requirement from \$500 to \$1,000 for the first five acres, except for properties under a woodlot management plan where the \$500 gross annual income requirement remains intact. Makes no change to the additional acreage income requirements (\$5/each additional acre for farmland and \$0.50/each additional acre for woodland).
- Establishes that if a property fails to meet the increased income requirement in a given tax year but remains in ag/hort use, the parcel will not be subject to roll-back taxes.
- Leaves in place the language that allows for federal USDA conservation program payments to count toward the minimum income requirement. Additionally, the bill allows for parcels enrolled in these conservation programs to maintain farmland assessment until the existing contract expires even if contract payments don't meet the \$1,000 minimum income requirement. Once the existing contract expires, these landowners would then be required to satisfy the new \$1,000 minimum income requirement.

Role of the Farmland Assessment Advisory Committee

- Changes the name of the Farmland Evaluation Advisory Committee (FEAC) to the Farmland Evaluation Committee (FEC) and adds two new members to the committee. As currently structured, the FEAC includes a representative from the Division of Taxation, Rutgers-New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and the Department of Agriculture. S-589 would add a representative from the assessor community (municipal or county) and a farmer-member who is a current or former member of the State Board of Agriculture. Both of these new members would have to go through the public appointments process (nominated by the Governor, voted on by the Senate).
- Charges the FEC with reviewing the minimum gross sales requirement every 3 years and authorizes the FEC to raise it if they determine an increase to be appropriate. This review may happen sooner than once every three years at the call Secretary of Agriculture or Director of the Division of Taxation. Any increase does not take effect until the third year following the adoption of the increase.

Assessor Education

- Establishes a mandatory continuing education course on the farmland assessment program for local assessors and beginning in 2014, requires that every assessor working in a municipality with one or more farm-qualified property furnish proof of taking said course at least once every three years. The Division of Taxation will develop the curriculum for the continuing education course, and must offer the course at least biannually.

Proof of Sales/Inspections

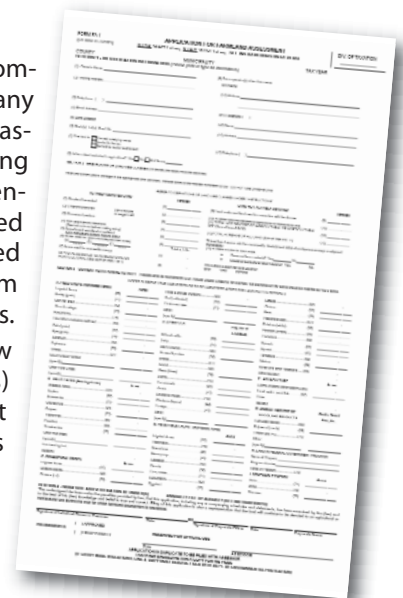
- Requires farmland assessment applicants to provide proof of sales or clear evidence of anticipated gross sales of ag/hort products in order to qualify for farmland assessment. Under the current Farmland Assessment Act, assessors can require that proof of sales be provided upon request. This bill requires that these proofs of sales now be submitted along with the FA-1 form each year on August 1.
- Reiterates the need for assessors to conduct inspections of all farmland assessed properties at least once every 3 years.
- For lands enrolled under a forest stewardship plan pursuant to P.L. 2009, Ch. 256, the bill requires that the application includes: "...documentation demonstrating implementation of the forest stewardship plan, including documentation of scheduled activities, a forest inventory and yield parameters to document forest productivity, and inspections performed, in accordance with rules and regulations adopted for the forest stewardship program by the Department of Environmental Protection."

Written Narrative and Map

- For farm management units seven acres or less in size, the bill requires that the landowner submit with the application a narrative that includes: a description of the ag/hort uses, the number of acres devoted to those uses and a sketch of the location on the farm of those uses.

FA-1 Form

- Requires that a letter accompany each application if any changes to the farmland assessment program (including changes to the aforementioned "generally accepted farming practices") occurred in the prior tax year to inform applicants of these changes.
- Requires that the FEC review the application form(s) within 1 year of enactment of the bill and every 5 years after that. The FEC then makes recommendations to the Division of Taxation if they deem that changes to the application are in order.



The bill new provisions in the bill would be applicable commencing in tax year 2015.



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www.njchristmastrees.org

Contact Donna Cole, Executive Secretary, at (908) 735-4658 or email execsecretary@njchristmastrees.org

DESIGNED AT BURLINGTON COUNTY COLLEGE

National Christmas Tree Association Director's Report

By: John C. Wyckoff, NJ Representative to National Christmas Tree Association



John Wyckoff

Hello from Belvidere, N.J. I would like to say thank you for electing me at The Winter Meeting as your representative to the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA). What a great and informative meeting it was, (except for the shoe leather that was mis-labeled as roast beef at lunch).

With the weather delay of this past winter, things are a bit hectic around here now that we can finally get back in the fields. However, I am taking time while everyone is out shearing this morning

to update you on a very important topic, our very own Christmas tree check-off program!

On February 7, 2014, President Obama signed the 2014 Farm Bill. Included in the bill is an amendment clearing the way for USDA to implement a check-off program designed for Christmas tree growers. The 2011 stay on the check-off must be lifted within 60 days of the bill's signing. The check-off is aimed at funding the promotion and research of real trees. I believe that we can all agree that promotion of our commodity is essential. For those who may be unfamiliar with check-off programs, they are what has fueled the dairy, beef, soy and other commodity groups successful marketing. Who hasn't heard "Got Milk?" Our check-off was initially proposed in 2009 and is the result of the hard work of numerous Christmas tree associations and is supported by NCTA.

John Wyckoff and the Wyckoff family own and operate Wyckoff Christmas Tree Farm in Belvidere, Warren County.

Funding for our check-off is just like all the others, producer funded. It is my understanding that for growers who sell five hundred or more trees, there will be an assessment of fifteen cents per tree sold. For growers who sell less than five hundred trees, there will be no assessment. However, we must remember that all growers are benefitting, and those who sell less than the five hundred tree threshold will be encouraged to voluntarily participate.

This program will be administered by a twelve member board of industry professionals (growers) appointed by USDA. USDA will solicit state associations and NCTA for nominations to fill the twelve member board.

As more information becomes available, I will be giving updates. This is all that is available as of this time.

On another note, the NCTA annual meeting will be held in conjunction with Michigan this year and promises to be a great event. Hope to see you there.

**NCTA @ Michigan / Midwest Regional Meeting July 25-26
Peterson's Riverview Nursery
873 26th St.
Allegan, Michigan 49010**

When Trunks Crack: What Should You Do?

By: Jeffrey H. Owen, Area Extension Specialist, NC University

The Symptom: Under certain climatic conditions, a small percentage of Fraser fir Christmas trees will develop cracks vertically along their trunks. These cracks usually begin at the cut base and extend up one side of the trunk. All of these cracks develop in the wood. The bark may remain intact with small cracks, but will split with larger cracks. Split trunks can develop in the field after the trees are cut, in storage on the farm, during transportation, on the retail lot, or in a consumer's home.

Is it a Problem? Most concerns about tree freshness related to trunk cracks can be put to rest. This is a problem of fresh trees that lose some of their moisture too rapidly. Given a fresh cut off the base of the trunk and placed in water, trees with cracks will take up water normally for the entire holiday season. Often, cracks will close up as trees take up water. If a tree is very dry or does not readily take up water, it is because the tree has been subjected to excessive drying after the crack developed. Cracks are not directly related to foliage freshness, a tree's ability to take up water, or fire safety (problems that occur after a tree has lost much of its water content).

A crack can be a problem with some tree stands. The pin-style tree stand that requires a pre-drilled hole in the center of the trunk may not be tight on a tree with a crack. Other stand types seldom have

problems. Where the rare tree is split across the base, few stands may hold it firmly.

Some retailers have clamped or screwed cracks closed quite effectively. Since wood and not the bark of trees take up water, such techniques should not reduce a tree's ability to absorb water. While trunk splitting can clearly be a customer relations concern, it is seldom a functional problem for effected trees.

In the retail setting, excessive drying; needle loss; or sun scald are much more critical problems associated with tree freshness. If a tree exhibits these other freshness problems as well as a crack, its freshness may be in question. Care, handling, and exposure directly impact freshness problems. These do not impact the coincidental presence of a crack.

The Mechanism: Trunk cracks occur in fresh trees that lose moisture rapidly over a short period of time. While the development of cracks is related to shrinkage of drying wood, the concept of shrinkage fails to capture the occurrence of cracks in fresh trees with high moisture content.

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Announcing: NJCTGA Newsletter Trading Post Ads

Do you have items you no longer use on your farm? Starting in the next edition of the newsletter there will be a section for member ads. You will be able to list either items for sale or items you are looking to purchase. Contact Matt Martini if you have any questions.

For Sale: Hardi Air-Blast cannon sprayer 100G 3pth manual chute \$1,500, Oliver 3 bottom 16 inch 3pth plow \$500.00 Salem Co. 930-355-2222, no Sundays, or email jsmith125@gmail.com
MORE AVAILABLE!!!

ADS ARE FREE, BUT MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING AD REQUIREMENTS:

- For Sale or Wanted items directly related to Christmas tree growing & production only.
- Personal, Business, Services, Commercially/Massed Produced Product ads not accepted.
- Business, Service and Commercial Products require purchase of regular Newsletter ad.
- Description limit: 30 words, text only, no photos or drawings.
- Any drawing or photo included in ad requires purchase of \$35 quarter-page newsletter ad (see ad specifications on page 6).
- List phone number or email address for contact.
- Ads will appear one time only. Resubmit to re-run ad.
- Limit: 1 ad per farm per newsletter edition.

The NJCTGA reserves the right to reject any ads not meeting these requirements. Submit your ad for review to Matt Martini at CherryvilleFarms@Earthlink.net. Ad will be published in next edition of the Newsletter.

President's Message continued from page 1

lot of positive press for NJ Christmas tree farms last year, and if someone is selling trees in NJ and does not belong to our group they are getting a free ride on the backs of those who support the industry, you and I.

It has been about a year and a half since I took over as your President. I am enjoying the position very much. The best part of the job has been some of the great friendships I have forged with some of our members. If you ever have any suggestions or questions

I am always available to talk, I love nothing more than talking about Christmas trees.

I know the hot weather is right around the corner, but try and enjoy the cool nights and rainy days while they last. See you at the meetings.

Chris Nicholson is our current President and the owner of Hidden Pond Tree Farm in Mendham, Morris County.

**Christmas Tree Pruning Services
Offered to Christmas Tree growers
of New Jersey**

Please Contact Michael Martin for information
@ (518) 335 - 7512

Grower's Spotlight:

EDWARDS CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

By: Tim Dunne



Tim Dunne

A long farm lane, through a dense northern Burlington County oak forest, leads you toward Edwards Christmas Tree Farm in North Hanover Township near Cookstown. As you leave the forest the fields open up to about 15 acres of pines, spruces and firs of all varieties. The farm is adjacent to McGuire Air Force base and the Edwards reward our dedicated military families with a special discount at Christmas time.

Anne and her husband Bill first planted trees in 1985 and began choose and cut sales about 10 years later. This was a difficult thing to learn say the Edwards', 10 years without income for a new Christmas tree farm. At Christmas time sons Scott and Michael help keep the operations running smoothly when things can get hectic with many customers at the farm at once. An organized shop area includes a small building that serves as headquarters and a gift shop. Covered balers help staff and customers during bad weather. Fields are arranged in blocks, trees are arranged by age and species. Bill mentioned that new growers should spend a lot of time planning their layout. "Make sure you leave enough pathways for tractors, customers, mowing and spraying", he said.



Bill and Anne Edwards in front of a large Norway spruce.

Anne has developed quite a touch with crafts that stock the gift shop at Christmas time. The Edwards also travel to a number of craft shows and events around New Jersey in the fall marketing their decorative gourds, pumpkins, wreaths and more. Anne explained how she is a self taught painter, learning from books on



A very nice farm sign greets customers near Cookstown, Burlington County.

how to paint. She showed me some amazing painted gourds that looked as if a lifetime professional had painted the scenes. The Edwards grow their own Indian corn, pumpkins and gourds for the fall crafts. One tip the Edwards have for other growers is



A close-up of one of Anne's gourd creations

to diversify the products you provide. Their operation includes sales of wreaths, grave blankets, pine roping, many types of crafts and more.

Anne and Bill joined the NJCTGA soon after they opened up their choose and cut tree operation in the 1990's and have received invaluable help from other members. Anne said they have not only received advice on growing trees, but also on marketing trees and other products. They even have had help from NJCTGA members on pumpkin and gourd production as many Christmas

tree growers also produce these fall crops. Anne recalled how at a NJCTGA meeting a session on making wreaths was held. She learned a lot, took a intensive class held later by the presenter and wreath making became an important part of their fall crafts and Christmas tree business. "Our wreath business all started with that session at the NJCTGA meeting" Anne said. Anne served several terms as NJCTGA President and she continues to serve on the Board and leads several efforts like the NJDA marketing grants the association receives and coordinating the new on-line newsletter. I am not sure how she has time for all these duties with her full-time day position as Associate Dean at Burlington County College.



Anne with several hand-painted decorative gourds

Anne and Bill's main advice to new growers is "you'll have to have a love for Christmas tree growing in order to be successful". The operation takes a great amount of time and dedication and is more than just a job it is a labor of love. "My Dad was a Christmas tree grower in Ohio and that helped put me through college", Anne said. "I have always loved Christmas trees".

Winter Meeting Revisited

The Winter Meeting was held on Saturday, January 25 at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Burlington County. It was an information packed meeting and included speakers discussing weed control, Integrated Pest Management, cryptomeria scale, pesticide safety and winning the national Christmas tree contest. Several chain saws were given away as door prizes throughout the day and luckily there were no snowstorms on the day of the meeting!



Dr. Mark Vodak from Rutgers University discussed the results of demonstration/ research plots for cryptomeria scale control on New Jersey Christmas tree farms

NJCTGA President, Chris Nicholson, presented the Grand Champion Award to the Wyckoff family during the winter meeting.



Anne Edwards was one of the lucky winners of a Stihl chainsaw door prize during the winter meeting.



NJCTGA President, Chris Nicholson, welcomed members to the annual meeting.

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NJCTGA Newsletter Ad Sizes & Rates

FULL PAGE	7.75" wide x 9.875" high \$100
Half Page	7.75" wide x 4.863" high \$60
Quarter Page	3.795" wide x 4.863" high \$35

If possible, ads should be submitted in PDF format, in 4-color process. Contact Director Charlie Brown for additional details.

When Trunks Crack

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The capillary tension of water inside the wood is the force involved in split trunks. Capillary tension is the force that holds liquid in small tubes such as the liquid in a glass thermometer. As moisture evaporates from foliage of a cut tree, the remaining water in the wood is stretched across the entire volume originally filled — from foliage to trunk. This increases the inward pull of water in the tree trunk — much like the vacuum you would create when sucking on a straw if you were drinking a milkshake.

When the force of capillary tension exceeds the strength of the wood, cells rupture and a crack develops. The tensile strength of Fraser fir wood is only about 180 psi. The forces involved in capillary tension have been measured as high as 515 psi -- much greater than the strength of the wood. When the cell wall of a vessel collapses, integrity is lost, more cells collapse, and the crack splits open.

Trunk cracks are a problem of fresh trees. Research at NC State University has documented the formation of cracks at high moisture content in the wood of Fraser fir, but not after it has dried out. In fact, capillary tension is absent when air fills the vessels in the wood after the water has been lost.

Contributing Factors: Trunk splitting is a function of rapid moisture loss from cut trees. Cut trees can lose some moisture from the cut end of their trunks, but lose most from the foliage as it respire or breathes. The rate at which tree foliage respire is closely linked to climatic conditions and tree dormancy.

Full sun, high temperatures, and dry winds can pull moisture from the foliage of cut trees. While drought prior to cutting may be a contributing factor to the stresses that initiate cracks, the primary factor is exposure to conditions that dry the tree out rapidly. Cracks can develop the day after rain if newly cut trees are subjected to sun and wind. Cracks have occurred in cold temperatures accompanied by dry winds, but exposure to bright sun and temperatures above 70 degrees are the conditions most likely to result in split trunks. Cracks will develop during a period of severe exposure whether it occurs in the field, in storage, during transportation, or on the retail lot. Since trunks can split during any period of exposure, all handlers must share in the responsibility for tree care.

Recommendations: When a tree develops a crack follow these recommendations:

- Educate your customers. Give them a copy of this article. Explain that cracks develop in fresh trees that undergo rapid drying. Be sure to explain that most trees will still readily take up water.
- Keep a few alternative-style tree stands on hand to sell.
- Keep a few large hose clamps on supply to be able to clamp trees.
- Minimize drying conditions that initiate cracks. Manage for increased shade, humidity, and shelter from wind.
- Store and display all your trees in water.

TREES AND BUSHES FOR SALE

Crosswind Farm
Chesterfield Township, Burlington County

The following trees and nursery stock are available for sale:

- 200 – Blue Spruce, 2 to 4 ft
- 60 – Blue Spruce, 5 to 6 ft
- 75 – Canaan Fir, 3 to 5 ft
- 150 – Canaan Fir, 8 to 12 ft
- 50 – Greek Fir, 6 to 8 ft
- 100 – Nordmann Fir, 6 to 8 ft
- 100 – Norway Spruce, 3 to 5 ft
- 200 – Norway spruce 6 to 8 ft
- 50 – Red Maple Trees
- 9 – Red Twig Dog Wood
- 10 – Blue Maid Holly
- 10 – Winterberry Red

Cash only, no reasonable offer refused.
Contact Tom at 609-372-8157
or email cwindmas@msn.com

Welcome New Members!

Fred Van Meter, Van Meter's Christmas Tree Farm
Bridgeton, Cumberland County

Joseph Corrado, Corrado's Farm
Oxford, Warren County

Save the Date!

Watch your mail for more information:

Twilight Meeting, Thursday, June 19 • 6:00pm-8:00pm
Bob Housedorf will be hosting the Twilight Meeting at his farm, Black Oak Farm, 9 Black Oak Lane, Asbury, NJ 08802

Summer Meeting, Saturday, August 16
Dennis and Jeff Foster will be hosting the Summer Meeting at their farm, Foster's Holly Ridge Tree Farm in Hammonton.

Down on the Farm

Do you have a funny farm story, a favorite piece of equipment you'd like to recommend or tips you'd like to share with other Christmas tree growers?

We want to include these tips and stories in future editions of the newsletter. Send them to Donna Cole at execsecretary@njchristmastrees.org

