



Positive Growth



Chris Nicholson

A year has passed since I was elected to become the President of the NJCTGA. My first column was entitled "Moving Forward, Together". This is exactly what we have done in the past year. Our board of directors has worked tirelessly on behalf on our association and all of our members. Our membership has increased dramatically. Our annual meetings were all well attended and full of useful information. Our website ran smoothly throughout the selling season. Our cost cutting measures have resulted in positive financial growth. Our newsletter, although a work in progress, has gotten off the ground and has been very well received by our members. Our email list is up to date along with all of our membership information and statistics. I could go on and on. The point I am making is that our board members all stepped up to the plate and spent countless hours working together so that the NJCTGA could not just exist, but thrive.

I hope you all noticed the positive press that was generated this past season. John Wyckoff brought lots of media attention to the Christmas tree industry in New Jersey with his National Grand Champion award. It seemed like he mentioned the NJCTGA in every interview he gave, which helped us all sell our trees. John and Cynthia Curtis were featured on WABC TV in New York, and their heartwarming segment made me want to visit their farm and cut down a tree. It seemed like not a day went by that we didn't receive some sort of positive press, and this helps us all sell trees.

The tree cutting ceremony to celebrate our NJ Grand Champion went off without a hitch on December 2, 2013. A big thank

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"Surviving" a Pesticide Inspection

By: Matt Martini

So you get that dreaded call from the NJDEP. You know the one. Your stomach starts to go into a knot as the caller explains that the DEP is going to perform a random inspection in accordance with the Pesticide Control Program at your farm...and is tomorrow OK? Well after making the appointment for a few days down the road you exhale and review your paperwork and check your site to make sure everything is in order. Hopefully, a few tips based upon the experiences of others can help you prepare for the actual inspection.



When the NJDEP shows up most likely there will be two representatives flashing their badges. It would be a good idea to write down their names, telephone numbers and email addresses (or get their business cards if they have them) for any future reference. Don't be surprised if a USEPA representative comes along as well. You'll be asked to sign a form giving voluntary consent for the inspection. Have a pad with you to right down any of their concerns or recommendations. Right from the get go be advised it's best to be quiet and let them do the talking. Offering information or off the cuff remarks could get you in trouble... so expect moments of awkward silence as they inspect.

The first few questions will be of a general nature: who does the application, show your license card, how many workers do you have and let's review your application records. Now most of us operate as private applicators and don't have employees. But if you do, beware. It's been known that one tactic is for one inspector to pull a worker aside and question them for comparison to your answers by the other. Any sign of inconsistency could be a problem. With respect to application records, by law they can look back 3 years. There are various forms out there and they prefer the ones on their website: www.state.nj.us/dep/enforcement/pcp.

However other formats that are customized for your use are generally acceptable provided that all the information required is somewhere on your form. A binder stored away from the chemical storage area is recommended.

You should have your chemical storage records up to date and a copy of the letter that you sent to the fire department before May 1st. Remember, the letter includes a map showing where the storage area is in relation to a road in case of emergency. Some folks use a print of a property survey that shows all the structures, roads, etc. It's recommended to depict the tree plantation with plot or field numbers corresponding to the application records. You may be asked to provide copies. Whatever you copy, make a copy for yourself with a notation that you gave it to them.

The inspectors may want to see the plantation but normally aren't too interested in the trees. Having a good sketch or map helps. However, if you have workers or easy access by the neighbors or general public, remember that certain chemicals need to have restricted entry signs posted. They may want to inspect you PPE so have it in order. The chemical storage location will be of interest next. It should be clean and neat and have a spill kit.

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“Surviving” a Pesticide Inspection

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Don't have any rags or old containers around. The inspectors will probably take a few digital pictures. Ideally you have an emergency wash area, a hose, faucet or large fill tank, right at the area where you mix and load chemicals. It must be clean, no stains.

Lastly, they may want to see your spray equipment. Again, clean and neat helps to show a compliant operation and avoids questions. At the end of their inspection to avoid any surprises ask if everything is ok and will you get any report from them. They may have a few recommendations, hopefully nothing serious or you could be fined on the spot. The above is based on experiences of a few fellow tree growers. Any individual inspection may be more or less intrusive depending upon the inspector and the condition of your paperwork and site. The general feeling is that beyond insuring proper application records and chemical storage, inspectors will drill deeper into operations that employ workers to make sure they are protected. Hopefully this information helps prepare you for a successful inspection rewarded by a cold beer afterward.



The Martini Family

Matt Martini and family have been growing Christmas trees for 17 years on Cherryville Farm, located in Franklin Township, Hunterdon County

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

DESIGNED AT BURLINGTON COUNTY COLLEGE

Summer 2013 Meeting “Snapshots”



Les Alpaugh explains farm history, tree layout and deer fencing to a wagon load of New Jersey Christmas tree growers at the summer meeting.



Les Alpaugh demonstrates shaping a spruce top with a long handled pruner.



Rutgers Extension Specialist Mark Vodak discusses tree shearing strategy.



Andy Alpaugh explains his balled and burlaped operation which utilizes a mechanical tree tying device as well as a tree spade.

The 2013 summer meeting was held on Saturday, September 14th at Evergreen Valley Christmas Tree Farm in Washington, Warren County. The Alpaugh family including Pat, Les, Sara, Sam, Kate and Andy graciously hosted the meeting. The farm was started in 2003 by the Alpaugh family and has grown into a fairly large Choose and Cut operation with sales beginning in 2009. Dug tree sales started in 2012. Thank you to the Alpaugh family for hosting the summer meeting!

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you goes out to the Wyckoff family for being, once again, such gracious hosts. The NJ Department of Agriculture was there and Secretary Fisher cut down a tree to celebrate the Choose and Cut season kicking off in NJ. A little twist was added this year when we unveiled a proclamation from Governor Christie declaring the “Jersey Grown Christmas Tree Season” to be off and running. I sincerely thank the Christie administration for supporting the NJCTGA this season.

I am proud to announce that the NJ Grand Champion will be crowned the “New Jersey Christmas Tree Grower of the Year” at the annual agricultural convention in Atlantic City. This is a new award and our grand champion will now get some additional well deserved recognition by his or her peers in the agricultural community. This award is a direct result of the NJCTGA working side by side with the NJ Department of Agriculture.

The winter meeting on Saturday, January 25th kept the focus on growing trees. All of the speakers presented useful information on various aspects of successful tree cultivation and safe practices. The winter meeting was also a great place to get to know other growers on a personal level and share ideas. I met a lot of you at the winter meeting and look forward to meeting many more of you at future meetings!

I wish you all the best of luck in 2014.

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

National Christmas Tree Cutting Ceremony at Wyckoff Farm

A Blue Spruce Christmas Tree grown by John Wyckoff, of Wyckoff's Christmas Tree Farm in Belvidere, Warren County, was named Grand Champion of the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) 2013 National Christmas Tree Contest. As growers of the Grand Champion tree, the Wyckoff's earned the right to present the official White House Christmas Tree to President and First Lady for 2013. "The fact that an American farm family gets to provide a Christmas Tree to be displayed in the White House indicates just how important a farm-grown Christmas tree is to the traditions of our country," said Cline Church, NCTA president and a Christmas Tree grower from Fleetwood, N.C. "Our whole industry is proud of the Wyckoff family for showcasing our crop in the most famous house in America."

To enter NCTA's national contest, growers must first win their state/regional competitions in the previous 12 months. While this is their first time to be Grand Champion of the NCTA contest, the Wyckoff's are no strangers to winning the New Jersey's Christmas Tree Competition. Their farm grew New Jersey's Grand Champion Christmas tree in 2013, 2012, 2011, 2008, 2007, 1999, 1992, 1990 and 1978.

White House staff members typically travel to the Grand Champion's farm in October to select the tree that will serve as the centerpiece of the Blue Room holiday decorations. The selected tree is typically cut and presented to the White House shortly after Thanksgiving.

(This article is a portion of the August 28, 2013 press release from the National Christmas Tree Association)



The Wyckoff family poses for a group family picture at the national grand champion ceremony with the White House representatives at their Belvidere farm on Oct. 30, 2013.



John Wyckoff being interviewed by a reporter at the national grand champion ceremony with the White House representatives at the Belvidere farm on Oct. 30, 2013.



New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania television stations, HGTV network and local and regional newspapers swarm John Wyckoff at the national grand champion ceremony with the White House representatives at the Belvidere farm on Oct. 30, 2013.



NJCTGA Banner congratulating the Wyckoffs for winning the national grand champion tree.

Grower's Spotlight:

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

By: Tim Dunne



Tim Dunne

What do you expect when you hear the name "Perfect Christmas Tree Farm"? Row after row of beautifully sheared trees in a delightful setting is what I thought of, and that is what I found when I visited with John Curtis at his farm near Phillipsburg in Warren County this summer. John and his wife Cynthia have run this 45 acre farm, with 40 acres in trees, and an established choose and cut operation since 2003. John has also had a Christmas tree farm in Lehigh, PA since the 1970's and previously ran a farm in Cape May County, NJ. Besides John and Cynthia, Nathan Blackwell, a local Phillipsburg resident helps with almost all the farm duties. John's faithful dog "Santapaws" also helps out as much as he can.



Overview of Perfect Christmas Tree Farm in Phillipsburg, Warren County.

John specializes in growing exotic firs at his farm and is very proud of the 45 varieties of trees on the farm. John says he "grows everything but Norway spruce on the farm". He can tell you everything



John and his dog "Santapaws" examine an exotic fir.

(and some things you don't want to know) about unique exotic varieties from our Pacific Northwest, Europe, Russia, Japan, Turkey, Greece, China, and elsewhere. John also showed me some unique management he is experimenting with like "leader scarring". In the spring or early summer the base of the true fir leader is scarred several times, using a knife, to interrupt the cambium layer of the leader and slow the leader growth. This may reduce work in cutting back terminals at shearing time

and produce a nicer tree. It works well about 50% of the time.

Cynthia manages the beautiful Christmas Shop at the farm in their 1700's era farmhouse. The farmhouse kitchen and dining room



Beautifully decorated dining room and kitchen that serves as the farm Christmas Shop during December.

are decorated with thousands of lights and ornaments from around the world. She showed me some very delicate ornaments she recently purchased for resale at the farm that were all handmade from the Czech Republic. The shop is full of treats like this at Christmastime.

John has been a NJCTGA member since the 1970 when he bought a farm in Lehigh Pa, with trees already on it. John enjoys the winter, summer and twilight meetings the association has where he "hears from a range of speakers, meets other growers, state officials and university professors". He particularly likes conversing with other growers at these events where he can compare notes, learn some new ideas and pass his knowledge on to others. John also has been active for several years as a NJCTGA Board member and as the coordinator of the annual NJCTGA display at the Warren County Fair.



Scarred leader in a true fir to help manage excess terminal growth.

John had a couple tips for new growers. "Do not try to grow trees too fast. Don't try to get too much growth from the leader by not cutting it. Be patient, wait until the proper time and shear trees enough to get a well shaped tree. This may take a year longer but the final product will be much more appealing". Also John warned "if you are going to grow Doug fir, be prepared to spray, spray, spray!"

One can tell of the Curtis' love of Christmas tree growing by the care taken to establish and maintain the diverse array of trees at Perfect Christmas Tree Farm.

What's Shaking at NJCTGA

- Would you be interested in hosting a twilight meeting or summer meeting at your farm? Contact Chris Nicholson or Donna Cole for more information or if you would be interested in hosting.
- Annual dues notices were mailed in January. Contact Donna Cole if you did not receive a dues notice or if you have any questions.
- Watch your mail for the application for the annual Choose and Cut Christmas Tree Guide. Over 10,000 copies of this guide were printed and distributed last year and it is posted on the NJCTGA website for internet access.
- Do you have equipment recommendations, tips or information that you would like to share with other Christmas tree growers in the newsletter? If you do, contact Donna Cole for more information and assistance.

The 2013 NJ Christmas Tree Cutting Ceremony was held at Wyckoff's Farm in Warren County on December 2nd. From left to right, Chris Nicholson, President NJCTGA; John Wyckoff; Douglas Fisher, NJ Secretary of Agriculture; Allison Blake, Commissioner, NJ Department of Children and Families.



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