



NJCTGA News

Fall 2021

President's Message



Chris Nicholson

By the time you read this you will undoubtedly be doing your final preparations for the busy sales season ahead. It promises to be another adventurous season this year. The Covid issues are still a worry and we have once again provided the National Christmas Tree

Associations "Best Practices Recommendations" for Covid in this issue. Use common sense and be safe.

Supply chain issues have caused some tree lot supplies to be in short supply. Hopefully you have been able to find all you need to have a good sales season. You might contact nearby NJCTGA member to see if they can help you out if you run short of some items.

We have included a timely article from the Exotic Conifer Association newsletter about pricing your trees in 2021. Remember, most items you need to run your farm this December are up sharply in price. In addition fertilizer, agrichemicals and transplants will all be higher in 2022 you can be sure. Price your trees accordingly. Remember your trees are professionally grown, they get tender loving care for 7-10 years after you plant them and most customers do not mind paying a fair price for a fresh local product.

We have a great line-up for our annual winter meeting at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Columbus, NJ on Sat. January 29th, 2022. Dr. Ricky Bates from Penn State will be our featured speaker. He will present information on his long term work with exotic firs and disease resistance. Tim Waller Rutgers will present his work on Phytophthora root rot, a potential problem for many growers and Dr. George Hamilton will provide us with a pesticide update. Come out to the

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Pricing Your Trees in 2021? Think **UP!**

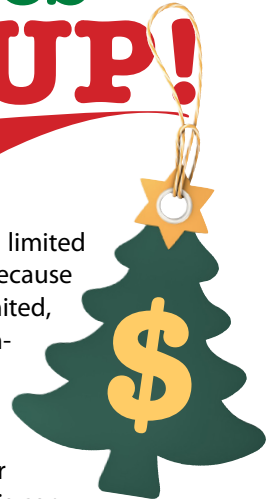
By: Matt Mongin

Reprinted from the Exotic Conifer Association Newsletter

As you read our Fall 2021 ECA newsletter, many of you will be thinking about pricing your trees and the ones you are buying in as pre-cuts for the 2021 season. I think we can expect a pretty hefty price increase this year. Here's why. With the country still emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, market analysts are projecting another good year for those seeking real trees to celebrate Christmas. Like last year, the availability of choose-and-cut Christmas trees, farm grown in the Midwest and East, is about the same as last year - not enough. Many of us experienced record sales, long lines, parking issues, and early closing. We just had too many customers. If the weather cooperates on the three critical sales weekends, expect high demand again this year.

Supplies of pre-cut trees are again limited, or as some like to say, 'tight'. Also, as most know who have tried to buy in pre-cut trees, there are none to be had. This has closed a fair number of boy scout and other popup Christmas tree lots in our town and others. So, more customers will be arriving at our farms and the box stores for their 2021 Christmas trees. The Wall Street Journal reports that supply chain disruptions, principally shipping issues from China to the USA, have significantly delayed the 2021 shipments of artificial trees and accessories (WSJ 9.17.2021). As a result, store inventories are thin and prices are up. For example, Balsam Hill, a major retailer of mid-to-high priced artificial trees, is reporting 20% price increases for their premium trees. Their better plastic trees could cost \$1,000 or more for some. In short, supplies of quality Christ-

mas trees will be limited again this year. Because supplies will be limited, there is a strong incentive for Christmas tree growers to increase their prices from last year and years past. This is consistent with higher prices for inputs such as fertilizer, chemicals, transplants, equipment, and particularly wages. In Ohio, while the minimum wage is about \$8.00 per hour for farm and nursery workers, even the local McDonalds is advertising for help at \$15.00 per hour and not getting enough workers to assure us a Big Mac at lunch time. Labor costs are up and likely not to be lower going forward. During our Ohio Christmas Tree Association summer meeting held in September, a session on pricing was well attended and lively. We learned that there are several methods for pricing trees including: pricing and tagging each tree, pricing by the foot or inch, and flat rate pricing. Growers offered lots of reasons for their particular method but many agreed pricing by the foot is the least labor-intensive method. Also, there was no agreement on a specific price per foot - even for a common type of tree such as Canaan Fir. For that most common tree, the range in increased prices for 2021 was \$8.50 - \$12.00 per foot and higher depending on the size of tree. Bigger trees earned higher per-foot prices. There is also a strong local component to pricing. Farms close to urban areas earn higher prices. Growers



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A Visit to a National Christmas Tree Association Annual Meeting

By: John and Karyn Benton

Have you ever thought of attending a national NCTA meeting? We did. This year's meeting was held at Shatley Farms in Jefferson, North Carolina. Jefferson is a small town in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina, about 2 hours west of Greensboro.

The meeting included a broad spectrum of topics, lectures and discussions. All attending had an opportunity to talk with growers from Christmas tree farms throughout the USA. The highlight of the meeting was the opportunity to share ideas, try new solutions to problems, and enjoy excellent tours of several tree farms in North Carolina.

If there ever was any doubt, we learned that Fraser fir is definitely king in North Carolina. Demand for Fraser fir is strong and this demand is growing faster than North Carolina farmers can grow these beautiful trees. Prices are steadily increasing for both pre-cut wholesale tree sales and on-farm retail sales. Most folks might think that the Fraser fir growers sell all their trees to the wholesale market but more and more are now beginning to open select fields for the local Choose & Cut market.

One of the issues that was discussed at the national meeting was the difficulty that people have getting into the Christmas tree business. It seems across the entire country that new growers have difficulty finding quality tree seedlings and just difficulty in getting started in the business. This problem may best be addressed at the local level with connections to the State Associations or special meetings for beginners no matter their age. We definitely need to attract more youth into our associations to keep us healthy and growing.

Another subject of discussion was the Heat Dome Effect (Global Warming) and drought conditions in much of the west coast regions this year. Many trees were lost & could not survive the extreme weather conditions. This will impact tree seedling & tree availability into the future. Deer issues seem to be common everywhere. We learned that three strand, multi level fence systems



NJCTGA members at the National Christmas Tree Association National meeting in Jefferson, NC in July, 2020. Left to right John and Leslie Wyckoff, Jeff Bush, and John and Karyn Benton.

seems to be a common resolution to keeping the deer out.

I was surprised to learn that many Choose & Cut farms price all their trees that they sell in the field, with price tags or price color codes and that the cutting of the tree is done by a farm employee, not the customer. The field tour section of the conference was excellent. To get into the 5'x5' planted fields of beautiful Fraser fir, that are growing as far as you can see, really gives you that special feeling of a job well done! Hills are the norm and planting right up to the sky seems to be no problem. The BBQ of just about everything edible helped make this trip a real treat and fun vacation!

President's Message *continued from page 1*

meeting, hear some interesting talks, enjoy reviewing the 2021 season with friends and colleagues and maybe go home with a door prize! Hope to see you there.

Chris Nicholson

Tree Pricing *continued from page 1*

surrounded by rural communities, less so. All agreed however, that prices in 2021 will be moving higher. Will higher prices discourage customers? The general feeling among the growers at the Ohio meeting is that they have had few, if any, complaints about the increasing price of their trees in the past and expect few complaints this year. Many noted that customers were more concerned about being able to buy a high-quality fresh cut tree than its cost. One grower suggested, 'if you aren't hearing some mild complaining about your prices from ten percent of your customers, your prices are too low.' So maybe 2021 is the year to 'price up'.

Published by the New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Association
njchristmastrees.org

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

DESIGNED AT ROWAN COLLEGE AT BURLINGTON COUNTY



Christmas Tree Sellers Hit by Supply-Chain Disruptions

Reprinted from The Wall Street Journal

Supply-chain disruptions will make decking the halls more expensive than ever for consumers looking for artificial trees this Christmas.

Some U.S. retailers are raising prices by 20% to 25% to keep pace with skyrocketing shipping costs and they are warning that certain trees could sell out early because deliveries from overseas producers have been hit by the congestion that has tied up distribution networks from ports in China to freight yards in Chicago.

Balsam Hill, a Redwood City, Calif., company that sells medium- to high-end trees online and in stores, is raising prices by 20% on average, with list prices for some of its trees pushing close to and beyond the \$1,000 level it charges for its premium trees. "We've never raised prices anywhere close to that in our history and will make way less money," said Mac Harman, the firm's chief executive.

The company's 7 ½-foot tall Brewer Spruce with clear LED lights is listed at \$999 this year, up from \$899 last Christmas. Its 4½-foot tall Grand Canyon Cedar tree with clear fairy lights will list at \$499, up from \$300 last season, as soon as it is in stock.

Mr. Harman said he expects the company's U.S. inbound shipping costs will quadruple this year compared with 2020, reaching \$45 million to \$50 million on projected sales of \$200 million to \$250 million.

Mr. Harman expects to run low on many holiday items, such as ornaments, toppers and lights, because of shipping delays. His firm is currently struggling with fall items, such as autumnal wreaths and Halloween decorations. This time last year, the company had about 40,000 fall items in stock. As of the first week of September, it had fewer than 1,500 items, Mr. Harman said.

Retailers that import holiday items such as trees are heavily exposed to supply chain disruptions, not only because the goods have a limited sales window with the end of the holidays. A tree that arrives too late must be heavily discounted or stored for a

year. Rising container shipping rates hit artificial Christmas trees hard because only so many will fit into a container, so the cost per tree rises quickly when ocean prices go up.

The average price world-wide to ship a 40-foot container has more than quadrupled from a year ago, to just over \$10,000, according to a global pricing index by London-based Drewry Shipping Consultants Ltd. Artificial-tree importers said they are paying \$20,000 per container or more on shipping's spot market and are still struggling to find enough boxes to fill inventories in time for the holiday season.

"It's become almost a full-time job trying to find the best price you can get and getting the space," said Nathan Gordon, president of Christmas Central, a mainly online seller of holiday goods based in Buffalo, N.Y. Mr. Gordon said some days he pays \$22,000 per container, up from \$3,500 last year.

The artificial Christmas tree market is a \$1 billion to \$2 billion industry, according to the American Christmas Tree Association. The group, which represents sellers of artificial trees, estimates that 85% of American homes that had a tree last Christmas used an artificial one, up from 46% in 1992.

Artificial trees were popularized in Germany 150 years ago, where they were made of dyed goose feathers. Today, they are mostly made from plastics, can cost anywhere from less than \$100 apiece to more than \$1,000 and can come already outfitted with lights and decorations. "They can be reused year after year, and are sustainable, safe, convenient, and cost-effective," said Jami Warner, executive director of the American Christmas Tree Association.

Tree vendors reported tight supplies of live trees last year, partly the result of light plantings since the 2008 financial crisis of saplings that can take up to a decade to grow to market size. But the National Christmas Tree Association, which represents tree growers, says live trees should be available this year. "We've never run out of Christmas trees," said Tim O'Connor, the association's executive director.

The window for importing seasonal products is short for many retailers. Big-box retailers usually begin shipping trees from Asia in June or July so that they are in stores by Oct. 1, said Dean Tracy, a former director of international logistics for Lowe's Cos. who runs a North Carolina-based logistics and sustainability consulting firm, Global Integrated Services.

"If it's sitting on the West Coast on a ship at anchor or still in the Far East there's a good chance Christmas is going to come late," Mr. Tracy said.

Bottlenecks at seaports as well as congestion at rail terminals, warehouses and distribution networks has extended the time it takes to get goods from China and other Asian export points to markets in the U.S. There were 56 container ships anchored off the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the major U.S. import gateways, waiting for berth space on Tuesday morning and the wait times for some vessels had stretched beyond two weeks, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California.

Executives at Lowe's and Big Lots Inc. have said in recent weeks that they pulled forward holiday imports to mitigate the impact of supply-chain delays. "I think we feel really nicely positioned," Lowe's Chief Financial Officer, David Denton, told a Goldman Sachs global retailing conference on Sept. 9.

U.S. imports of artificial trees were up 45% in July compared with the same month last year, when the flow of goods was heavily disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, according to trade analysts Panjiva, while overall Christmas-related imports were down almost 25%.

The National Tree Company, which mostly sells online via retailers such as Amazon.com Inc. and Wayfair Inc., imported almost half of its artificial trees before the end of June, said Chief Executive Chris Butler.

Mr. Butler said that despite the company's efforts and willingness to pay higher ship-

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NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION

Choose & Cut Farm COVID-19

BEST PRACTICES RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Christmas Tree Association has developed these best practice recommendations for Choose & Cut farms to use as guidance to adapt their business to the circumstances they will face during the 2020 Christmas season due to COVID-19.

Choose & Cut farms must protect the health and safety of their employees, provide customers with the confidence they need so they can enjoy selecting a tree without risk and demonstrate to state and local officials they are conducting business responsibly. We highly encourage you to develop the best possible response to these recommendations:

DEVELOP A COVID-19 PLAN

- Frequently sanitize items and areas such as hand saws, tree cart handles, counter tops, door handles and restrooms
- Limit the number of customers permitted inside buildings, minimize or eliminate wagon rides, fire pits, or other places that people gather
- Supply no touch garbage receptacles
- Offer Santa either on closed circuit TV or live at a distance
- Do not erect photo op "cut-outs" where faces come in contact
- Offer individually bagged food items instead of self-serve loose items such as cookies
- Provide a server for drinks instead of offering self-serve
- Require all dogs to be on a leash, or discourage dogs, as they cause unnecessary interaction among customers
- Encourage customers to tie their own trees on their vehicles by offering an instructional video

SALES & PAYMENT

- Install windows or plexiglass partitions at sales counters
- Offer Curbside pick-up
- Use a touchless pay credit card system
- Price products to limit the use of coins
- Eliminate the need for customer signatures on credit card transactions

PROTECTING CUSTOMERS

- Take staff temperature daily, provide PPE for all employees, do not permit staff exhibiting symptoms of illness to come to work
- Encourage customers to visit during non-peak hours

- Create special hours for select customers (elderly and at risk)
- Advise customers that you reserve the right to deny service to anyone displaying signs of illness or not following farm guidelines
- Have sanitizing stations available to staff and customers
- Request masks be worn by those able to without adverse health impacts
- Require masks be worn when social distancing is not possible, as on wagon rides to fields or in checkout lines
- Offer masks or neck gaiters for sale (with farm name or logo)

COMMUNICATIONS

- Discuss procedures with staff to keep employees safe
- Train staff on new procedures to keep customers safe
- Communicate early the proactive steps your farm is taking to keep customers safe through website, newsletter, social media, phone message, local paper, etc.
- Recommend signs at farm: wear mask inside buildings, limited numbers in gift shop (follow your state/county regulations), maintain social distancing, manage customer flow (one-way traffic in and out)
- Stress no visitors to farm if ill or had contact with someone ill with COVID-19
- Consider sign in sheet with family name and phone number. Break into morning/afternoon each day

RESOURCES

- Additional information is available on CDC, State and Local Health Department websites
- **There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted on plants or plant products** Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension/New York State Integrated Pest Management

Report from Our National Christmas Tree Association Delegate, John Wyckoff

Greetings from Belvidere! Here it is, late October and no frost yet. As we prepare to cut brush to begin making wreaths and other greens, we are hoping for a good hard frost to help fix those needles. Our fellow growers in the Great Lake States were experiencing similar concerns with lack of frost a couple of weeks back as they prepared for wholesale wreath production. Two weeks ago, I was amazed as I spoke with a grower from Oregon that was at that time loading a refrigerated shipping container of Noble fir destined for Dubai. What an incredible industry we are a part of.

NCTA Business

NCTA held its biennial in-person board meetings in Jefferson, North Carolina Thursday, August 5th. In the morning, I first participated in the Executive Board meeting with NCTA Executive Director Tim O'Conner-Colorado, President Dugald Kell-Maine, President-Elect Steve Meier- Missouri and Vice-President Joncie Underwood-Maryland. We then transitioned into a full Board meeting in the afternoon with twenty-one state association representatives in attendance. It proved to be a busy, fruitful day.

Friday began with the National Christmas Tree and Wreath contest. We began setting up early at Shatley Farms, the site of the combined NCTA/NCCTA meeting. The eager contest participants did not let us down with the exceptional quality of both trees and wreaths that were entered. Four of the tree contest entrants were past National Grand Champion growers. This contest is held biennially in conjunction with the NCTA in-person board meeting. Two Grand and Reserve Grand Champion growers are selected to represent our industry, one each for the coming two years.

The Grand Champion will present the Blue Room Christmas tree to the First Lady at the White House, typically the week of Thanksgiving. This event is an absolute production. The 18 ½ foot tree is first selected at the farm of the Grand Champion grower by White House staff. The tree is then presented on a horse drawn wagon by the grower in front of the North Portico of the White House. This event is a media frenzy that places our industry in the lime-light at the beginning of our choose and cut season. The publicity generated by this event is invaluable to the Christmas tree industry and could never be purchased.

The Reserve Grand Champion supplies a tree to the home of the Vice-President which is on the grounds of The Naval Observatory, also in Washington, DC.

For a list of contest winners, please see the NCTA website: realchristmastrees.org.

After setting up for the contest, we then joined in with the North Carolina association on Friday and Saturday for their annual meeting. There were various speakers, sessions and three different bus tours that filled the two-day event, as well as a large trade show.

Covid Best Practices

Last year, NCTA developed a list of Covid Best Practices for choose and cut farms. This document was distributed last season and is included again in this newsletter. The intent is to assist all growers in assessing their operations in an effort to protect themselves, their staff, as well as their patrons from Covid. Although things have changed in the past year, please take a moment to review these recommendations from NCTA.

Tree Tying Video

NCTA has developed a short video that gives step by step instruction on securing a Christmas tree to a vehicle for transport. This video is a free download from the NCTA website, realchristmastrees.org, and is for use by all Christmas tree farms. This instructional video is intended for customer use. The video can be used on your website to show customers how to tie a tree to their vehicle.

Upcoming NCTA Events

2022 national meeting July 14-16 in Nova Scotia, Canada
2023 national meeting and contest, Woclyn Tree Farms and Nursery, Cambridge, Minnesota

Have a safe, healthy, harvest season.
Merry Christmas, John Wyckoff

WANTED

Twilight and Summer Meeting Hosts

NJCTGA is seeking two farms to host meetings in South Jersey next year. Our annual June twilight meeting and summer annual meeting were held in Warren and Hunterdon counties this year and we want to move south in 2022. NJTGA Board and staff do most of the work related to the meeting details. All you need is a Christmas tree farm and be willing to host our members.

Please let us know if you can help.

**If interested, contact our Executive Secretary
Donna Cole at 908-735-4658**



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Welcome New Member!

Jim and Sharon McDermott

McDermott Christmas Tree Farm

Shiloh, Cumberland County

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. Contact Exec. Secretary Donna Cole for additional details.

N J C H R I S T M A S T R E E S . O R G

News from the Christmas Tree Promotion Board

“Dude Dad” to Spread the Real Christmas Tree Message

As a part of CTPB's 2021 campaign, we have secured a contract with Taylor Calmus, aka: Dude Dad; a top social media influencer. Dude Dad is known for his funny and irreverent take on parenting and everyday family life. His videos are viewed hundreds of thousands of times – some exceed a million views! His social media following is massive – with more than 3.5 million followers on Facebook, 800,000 plus on TikTok and more than 400,000 YouTube subscribers. Not to mention his television show “Super Dad” that is currently streaming on Discovery+ and will make its cable debut on the Magnolia Network in January.

Best of all, he is a real Christmas tree fan, so agreeing to work with the CTPB was an easy “yes” for Taylor. In addition to providing what promises to be an entertaining look at real Christmas trees on his social channels, Taylor will be serving as a spokesperson in our annual satellite media tour. He will join an industry representative and participate in up to 30 live interviews with local media outlets across the US.

You can check out some of his Dude Dad Videos at www.youtube.com/c/DudeDad.

Retail Locator – The Clock is Ticking

Hundreds of Christmas tree retailers have already signed up to be included in CTPB's free Retail Locator and now is the time to get your listing secured.



Choose & Cut Christmas tree farms are urged to sign up for the Retail Locator, prominently featured on the CTPB's consumer website: www.itschristmaskeepitreal.com. This invitation is also extended to Christmas tree producers who manage their own retail locations. In fact, ANY location selling real Christmas trees is welcome to sign up for the locator – at NO charge.

The value of having all retail locations listed, is the number of choices that can be provided to consumers wanting to purchase a tree. Also, this locator provides the option for those listed to add a “Closed for the Season” message if they have to close early, saving time and frustration by consumers.

Last season, the website had more than 150,000 visitors and the Retail Locator was the most popular page!

Ready to sign up? Visit www.CTPB.info. You will also find other great resources for EVERYONE who retails real Christmas trees!

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Shearing Equipment



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Farmers Against Hunger – Seasonal Fundraiser

Once again this Christmas tree season the NJCTGA will support the NJ Ag Society's Farmers Against Hunger program. "Pounds for Pennies" donation jars and information posters will be available for NJCTGA members to host at their farms to collect donations. A \$1 dollar donation enables Farmers Against Hunger staff to deliver 10 pounds of fresh produce to neighbors in need.

To sign up this year see the Farmers Against Hunger Pounds For Pennies registration form on page 9.



Annual Winter Meeting Set

Mark your calendar and get ready for our annual winter meeting to be held on Saturday, January 29, 2022 at the Rutgers EcoComplex in Columbus, NJ. Speakers will include Dr. Ricky Bates from Penn State University presenting on his work on evaluating exotic fir species. Tim Waller from Rutgers Cooperative Extension will present his work on Phytophthora root rot that can devastate some species of Christmas trees. Dr. George Hamilton from Rutgers will give an update on pesticide regulations and safety. Pesticide license credits will be available. And as always, we will have a light breakfast, a delicious lunch and our popular chain saw door prize!

Look for as mailing from Donna Cole in early January to register for the meeting.

Supply Chain Disruptions continued from page 3

ping rates, it expects to import 10% fewer trees than planned this year. "Every day we are fighting to get containers," he said.

The privately held Cranford, N.J.-based company is raising prices for trees, wreaths and other holiday items by 25% to account for its higher costs. It is also selling to other U.S. retailers who found they couldn't source enough trees in time for the holidays.

"The message to customers is buy now and get what you need for Christmas," Mr. Butler said. "There are definitely going to be shortages and prices are going to be higher."

Christmas Tree Promotion Board continued from page 7

The Holderness Family Joins in the Campaign Fun!

Right on the heels of CTPB announcing that Dude Dad will join our 2021 real Christmas tree campaign, we are excited to share that The Holderness Family is also on board! Penn and Kim Holderness are practically royalty in the family-humor influencer realm. They will be creating a video specifically for the It's Christmas. Keep it Real campaign and sharing it on their Youtube, Facebook and Instagram channels.

In 2013, Penn and Kim hit publish on "XMAS Jammies" – a seem-

ingly innocent video Christmas Card intended for their immediate family. Overnight, their video went viral on YouTube and they've been making goofy videos with their family ever since. Seven years later, their videos have resulted in over a billion views and 4.5 million followers across social media. Their family also continues to be one of the most sought-after content creators for family brands.

Not familiar with their work? Check out their Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/c/theholdernessfamily/featured.



The New Jersey Christmas Tree Growers Association

and



Invite you to join our holiday fundraiser

“Pounds for Pennies”

By hosting a collection jar at your farm

Registration Form

Please complete the following information and return the form to participate. Check the supplies that you would like to receive and include the number of items.

Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Name and Number (cell and/or farm #): _____

☐ **Number of Jars:**

☐ **Number of Banners (indoor/outdoor use):**

☐ **Number of Small Framed Posters (8x11 to sit on counter):**

☐ **Number of Lawn Signs:**

Farmers Against Hunger will drop off or mail to you the supplies listed above. We will also provide you with an addressed envelope for remittance of collected funds.

Please complete the above fields and return form via:

Email to: gleaning.fah@gmail.com

or

Mail to: New Jersey Agricultural Society
1200 Florence-Columbus Road
Bordentown, NJ 08505

Please contact Lynn Flannery with any questions at (908) 507-2501.

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