

Shearings

November 2013



How tall did you say that tree was?

Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association
www.christmas-trees.org

Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association

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Calendar 2014

January	8	MCTA Board of Directors Meeting
January	16-18	Pennsylvania CTGAWinter Meeting
	23-25	CTFA of New York Winter Convention Liverpool, NY
February	5-7	New England Grows Boston Convention Center, Boston, MA

On the cover: Peter Sweet Sr. and Joan Sweet with their grandchildren as hosts of the 2013 MCTA Annual Meeting

NATIONAL NEWS

No agreements on the Farm Bill for 2013 to date which means the Check-Off program will not have an assessment for 2013 harvest, as it looks slim that the farm bill will pass before years' end.

NCTA to Offer \$99 Trial Membership is no longer available. It appears that many long term members were a little upset. NCTA has gone back to their Premier membership price structure for Retail and Commercial growers in addition to the \$.05 per tree (sold) amount and optional premier and other voluntary contributions.

Ways to Support Trees For Troops: A new **Trees for Troop Bears** are now available. Wholesale prices are available for gift shops. Minimum order of 3. This 8" teddy bear in military uniform with an individually numbered "Trees for Troops" dog tag. \$4.00 of each bear purchased goes to support T4T. 2013 Bears with camo uniform are \$11 each. Order from Harry Peckham, 785-878-3793.



A Tree's Christmas Children's Book an inspirations children's chapter book, which is a talking tree's story of it's Christmas adventures. Go to www.atreeschristmas.com . \$1.00 per book sold goes to T4T.



The **"PIN-UP"** program is active for 2013. If your farm wishes to support *Trees for Troops* but are unable to donate trees to the program, the Pin-Up program is a good way help. Your customers can donate a nominal amount (\$1 to \$5 is suggested) and sign their name to a "Share the Spirit" cut-out which is hung in a high traffic area in your shop or farm to show support of the *Trees for Troops* . Funds collected by your farm go directly to help fund *Trees for Troops* and the Christmas Spirit foundation. For more information Go to: treesfortroops.org

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Reprinted from the "Real Tree line"
Volume 53 Number 3 August 2013

Update on Selected Conifer Diseases in Connecticut – 2013

By Dr. Sharon Douglas, Dept. of Plant Pathology and Ecology, Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station, New Haven,

After a winter of record breaking snowfall, in Connecticut(as well as Massachusetts) we started the 2013 season with extended cool, wet spring, which was favorable for fungal infections of newly emerging needles and shoots. So, despite the current heat and periods of dry weather, we are seeing a number of fungal disease on conifers. Of particular interest are several fungal diseases on conifers. Of particular interest are severe tip blights, which produce look-alike symptoms, including *Sirococcus* blight, *Botrytis* blight, and *Diplodia* blight. Additionally, repeating Swiss needlecast is a disease that has been surprising a number of growers during the past few years.

III. SIROCOCCUS BLIGHT

1. Causal Agent: *Sirococcus conigenus*

2. Key Host: many conifers including Douglas-fir and blue and white spruce

Symptoms and Spread:

Higher than usual incidences of *Sirococcus* blight were observed on Douglas-fir and blue spruce in plantation and landscape trees this year. This level of disease was likely associated with the weather this spring. Young trees are usually more susceptible although trees of any age can be infected. *Sirococcus* blight rarely kills trees but can disfigure and reduce marketability. However,

repeated infections of young trees can result in tree death.

Symptoms first appear on succulent shoots and occasionally 1-year-old twigs in midsummer. Affected shoots often appear at random within the canopy of a tree. This disease is often confused with *Botrytis* blight but *Sirococcus* usually shows up later in the season.

However, symptoms are sometimes

more

pronounced in the lower portions of older trees. This is because low light levels increase the susceptibility of tissues to infection. Blue spruce is highly susceptible and 1-year-old shoots are commonly killed. The fungus attacks at needle bases, girdles the shoot, and results in tip dieback. Infected shoots turn brown and often develop a diagnostic shepherd's crook appearance. Pinpoint, brown fruiting structures of the fungus called pycnidia develop at the bases of infected needles or on infected shoots in mid to late-summer or early-fall. These are often visible with a hand lens. The fungus overwinters in these killed shoots and in cone scales. Spores of the fungus called conidia are spread by splashing rain or water during spring and into summer. Infections occur when conidia land on succulent tissues of newly emerging shoots during periods of wet weather and when tissues are wet for 24 hours or longer at 10-25°C (50-75°F). The longer the tissues are wet, the more severe the infection. These were exactly the conditions throughout Connecticut this spring. Infections result in stunting or disfigurement of the growing tips.

Continued on page 6

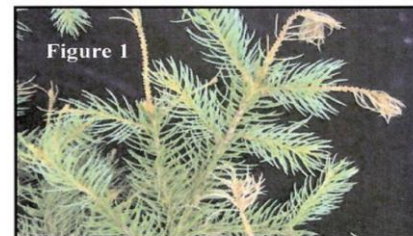


Figure 1. Multiple shoot tips exhibiting diagnostic shepherd's crook appearance of *Sirococcus* blight.

Management:

a. Use healthy stock and maintain tree vigor with good weed control, proper fertilization, and attention to planting site.

b. Rogue severely symptomatic trees.

Prune and remove any dead or dying branches when the bark is dry.

d. Practice good sanitation.

Spores can be spread from tree to tree by tools so shear healthy trees first or disinfect tools between cuts with household bleach (1 part bleach: 9 parts water) or 70% alcohol; avoid shearing when the foliage is wet to reduce spread of disease;

e. Use less susceptible varieties, when possible. blue spruce is highly susceptible;

f. Fungicide sprays.

in *all* cases, coverage is **very** important!

Chlorothalonil (Bravo, Daconil 2787, Daconil Ultrex, Daconil Weather Stik), chlorothalonil + fenarimol (TwoSome), and thiophanate methyl + chlorothalonil + mancozeb (Spectro 90 WDG), and azoxystrobin (Heritage) are registered for use; the label contains information on dosage rates and safety precautions; begin applications before new growth is approximately ½" long and repeat at label intervals depending on



Figure 3. Black spots are fruiting structures of the fungus develop on needles in the shepherd's crook.



Figure 4. Botrytis symptoms on developing new shoots of balsam fir

rainfall. Sprays should continue until shoots are

fully elongated and conditions are no longer favorable for disease.

II. BOTRYTIS BLIGHT

1. Causal Agent: *Botrytis cinerea*

2. Key Hosts: all conifers, especially spruce and fir

3. Symptoms and Spread:

Botrytis blight appeared on a number of conifers in both plantations and landscapes but white and blue spruce and Douglas-fir were particularly affected. *Botrytis* was observed on tender, succulent tips that had emerged during the extended cool, relatively moist May weather of 2006.

Botrytis blight can infect most conifers but is particularly problematic on seedlings, young trees, and trees that have been weakened, but not necessarily killed, by frost or freeze injury. It is also prevalent during periods of extended cool weather when shoots are elongating and immature tissues are present for longer periods than usual.

This spring, many conifers exhibited symptoms of *Botrytis* infection. Affected tissues initially appear water-soaked and then turn brown. Brown lesions girdle the shoots and cause them to wither and die. As the disease progresses, infections are identified by the gray, fuzzy, cottony growth of the fungus on the surface of needles and shoots. The fungus usually moves from the needles to the shoots and into the stems. With the exception of weak trees, infections usually do not extend beyond the current-season's growth and are often confined to tissues that have been damaged by frost. Botrytis blight is a more serious problem on seedlings or young trees than on established trees.

On established trees, infected shoots are walled-off and usually drop. On seedlings, young, or weak trees, the fungus can spread into shoots or the main stem where it causes cankers that eventually girdle and kill the shoot or tree. Refer to the fact sheet *Diseases of Christmas Tree Seedling and Transplant Beds* for more details. The fungus is an aggressive saprophyte so infections often

Continued on page 7

begin on shaded, senescent needles, and in other plant debris at the base of a tree.

Management:

a. Follow sound cultural practices to keep trees as healthy as possible. Weak and frost-damaged tissues are particularly susceptible to infection so it is important to select appropriate planting sites. Fertilize at the proper time and rate as determined by a soil test--avoid excessive nitrogen and late-summer and early-fall fertilization.

b. Avoid overcrowding to allow for good air circulation.

c. Avoid overhead irrigation or water early in the day so the foliage has a chance to dry.

d. Practice good sanitation.

spores can be spread from tree to tree by tools so shear healthy trees first or disinfest tools between cuts with household bleach (1 part bleach: 9 parts water) or 70% alcohol; avoid shearing when the foliage is wet to reduce spread of disease; diseased tissues should be removed as soon as they are evident in seedling beds; Fungicide sprays are usually not necessary for established trees. However, they can help to minimize damage to seedlings and new transplants among the compounds registered for use in Connecticut are:

ferbam (Ferbam), mancozeb (Protect), chlorothalonil (Daconil, Bravo), chlorothalonil + fenarimol (TwoSome), thiophanate methyl (Cleary's 3336), and copper sulphate pentahydrate (Phyton 27); the

labels contain information on dosage rates and safety precautions; applications can be made when new

shoots emerge and are continued as necessary since additional applications may be necessary in years with excessive rainfall.

I. DIPLODIA BLIGHT

Diplodia blight, formerly called Sphaeropsis tip blight, can be a destructive and devastating disease of pines, especially two- and three-needled species. Austrian, black, mugho, red, and Scots pine are very susceptible although many other species of pine are also affected, especially when growing

under conditions of stress. Trees of all ages are susceptible although older trees frequently sustain greater damage and disfigurement.

SYMPTOMS AND DISEASE DEVELOPMENT:

Diplodia blight is caused by the fungus *Diplodia pinea*. This fungus usually attacks mature trees, although it is more damaging to trees that have been under stress from drought, excessive soil moisture, root restriction, other site problems, or biotic stresses. Symptoms often first appear on the current season's needles, since the fungus rapidly kills

infected young, succulent shoots before the needles are fully elongated (Figures 1 and 2). As a consequence, needles on such shoots are often stunted. Infected shoots turn yellow gradually brown, and fruiting structures of the fungus are visible as small, black structures with conical beaks at the base of the infected needles (Figures 3 and 4). A diagnostic feature of Diplodia blight is the presence of stunted, straw-colored shoots with short needles and excessive resin flow.

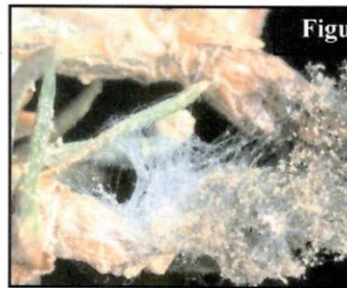


Figure 5. Diagnostic fuzzy brown Botrytis on infected tips.

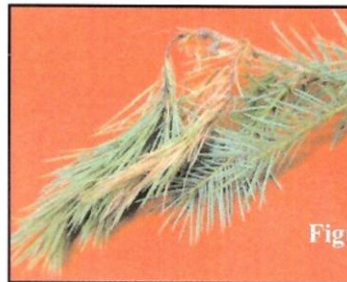


Figure 6. Infected young, succulent and are killed during elongation..



Figure 7. Close-up view of wilted, Douglas-fir shoot girdled by Diplodia infection.

Continued on page 8

In trees that are relatively free from stress, tip blight only kills the current-season buds, shoots, and second-year cones. Older twigs and branches are usually only damaged if trees are predisposed by stress, especially due to drought. This results in blighting and deformation of branches and limbs. In extreme cases, Diplodia blight can result in tree death. Figure 8. Infected new shoots are stunted and killed before they elongate. Diplodia blight is favored by wet spring weather, especially prolonged periods of budbreak, which promotes fungal growth and infection. Spores of the fungus are only spread during periods of rainfall and pines are particularly susceptible to infection in the early spring. Once again, trees which are predisposed by stress are much more susceptible than their stress-free counterparts.

The effects of Diplodia blight can be minimized by following a multifaceted approach to management that includes sanitary,

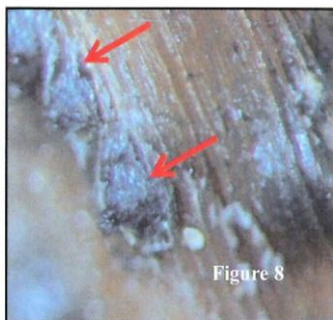


Figure 8. Small, black fruiting structures of Diplodia with conical beaks (arrows) develop in infected tissues.

cultural, and chemical methods. It is *very* important to prune and remove as many blighted twigs, branches, and cones as possible during dry weather in autumn. This helps to reduce the amount of the fungus available to infect the new growth in the spring. It is often necessary to sacrifice and remove severely symptomatic trees to reduce the amount of inoculum. Trees should also be kept as vigorous as possible by following sound cultural practices to maintain tree vigor, controlling insect infestations, and watering during periods of drought. All unnecessary stresses such as soil compaction or equipment injuries should be avoided, if possible. Fungicide applications can also supplement other

management strategies. Among the compounds registered for use in Connecticut are copper sulphate pentahydrate, mancozeb, mancozeb + copper hydroxide, propiconazole, and thiophanate-methyl. Consult the label for dosage rates and safety precautions. Since these fungicides act as protectant materials, they must be applied to the new growth as it emerges in spring. The first application should be made **before** any bud sheaths have broken and two or three additional applications can be made at label intervals, as necessary.



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Survey of Christmas Tree Buyers

Is it Motivation? Satisfaction?

*By Brett Crosby; Reprinted from the Quarterly Journal
Wisconsin Christmas Producers Association
Volume 28, No. 3 October 2013.*

No business can be built on unsatisfied customers. That's why an understanding of customer preferences is critical to developing a healthy, growing business. With this in mind, Custom Ag Solutions, an economic consulting firm, began its 2012 work on the first part of a two-part study to learn more about Christmas tree buyers and their preferences.

The study was developed with input from Christmas tree growers and grower organizations, and it was designed to discover more about consumer demographics, preferences, and satisfaction. The study was administered by surveying over 1,200 customers on choose-and-cut farms in Michigan and Virginia.

The survey was offered throughout the season between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and it was completed by customers who had just finished their purchasing experience. In an attempt to minimize selection bias, customers were paid \$5.00 to take the survey. This incentive was offered to avoid having the survey completed only by those who loved or hated the product/service, as is often the case with voluntary consumer surveys.

Demographics

Demographically, customers tend to be repeat buyers who bring children with them for the purchase. Over 72% of customers surveyed were repeat customers, and nearly 74% brought children with them to buy their tree. Since only 62% of respondents said they had children living at home, this suggests that a substantial number of buyers without children in the household bring

along a child (i.e. grandchild, niece, nephew) for the experience. The average household size of all respondents was 3.36, slightly higher than the national average household size of 2.58.

Why Buy a Tree

By a wide margin, the single most important factor in determining where to buy a tree is previous experience. Nearly 90% of those surveyed indicated that previous experience was the most important factor in deciding where to buy their tree. In distant second, location was important in choosing a venue, followed by word of mouth. Advertising was important to less than 45% of the respondents, which is logical if the majority of customers were repeat customers.

In making the decision to buy a live tree instead of an artificial tree, over 97% of those surveyed said appearance was important or very important, while over 91% said the experience was more important or very important. When purchasing their specific tree, 97% rated appearance as important or very important. Only 34% said price was very important in their decision. Clearly, the data indicates that buyers place a high degree of value on appearance and the selection experience.

Were they Satisfied

Customer satisfaction ranked very high in all locations.. on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, 98% rated tree quality with a 4 or higher rating (69.4% circled a "5"), while 99% rated the overall experience a 4 or higher (81.6% circled a "5") it's hard to do better than that.

What Stands Out

From the first year of the survey, several things stand out. First and foremost, Christmas trees are for kids. The better the experience for kids, the happier customers are likely to be. Second, customers care about the experience they have and the appearance of the tree they are buying.

Continued on page 10

Survey continued from page 9

This is important, because the appearance of a live tree is what drives many customer's decisions to buy live trees instead of artificial trees. Finally, the industry's customers seem to be very satisfied, so a key focus in growing the Christmas tree

market should be exposing more consumers to 1.) live trees and 2.) the quality and experience that can be found in selecting and purchasing a live tree. To help please contact Brett Crosby at bcrosby@casnow.com

MASSACHUSETTS 2013 GROWING DEGREE DAYS & Precipitation Rates Mar. 1 - Oct 4

	<u>Total GDD</u>	<u>Snow"</u>	<u>Precipitation Rates Mar 1 - Oct. 4</u>							
	Mar1 -Oct 4		Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept.	Total
Cape Cod	2723	33.25	7.05	5.25	5.35	8.61	0.25	2.05	4.65	33.21
SouthEast	2601	43.93	10.89	2.71	3.36	9.29	2.53	2.07	3.27	34.12
East	2724	54.11	4.95	1.58	3.89	10.62	7.53	3.54	3.14	35.25
metro West	2386	42.85	2.09	2.26	1.99	8.80	0.62	3.53	2.05	21.34
Central	2377	82.73	1.39	2.35	4.45	9.70	1.93	3.58	3.26	26.66
Pioneer										
Valley	2658	25.01	1.69	1.99	5.62	8.95	3.54	3.27	4.06	29.12
Bershires	2257	10+	3.04	2.23	7.90	8.40	5.83	3.61	6.50	37.51

* Statistical information obtained from Umass Landscape Messages 2013 & NOAA.





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Square vs. Intuit GoPayment: Mobile Credit Card Systems Compared

Is a Mobile Credit Card System Right for you?

Figuring out which card reader is “right” for you depend on all of the features already mentioned so far. Do you need money the moment you swipe? Do you want a discount for high-volume selling? Do you want to scan checks? Does build quality matters? These questions are just a few of the many you may ask yourself when figuring out which reader to grab, but in the end they all are solid choices for the businessperson, whether they be for once-in-a-while purchases, seasonal, short term events or serious sales volume.

The mobile-payment market has been evolving rapidly. With the ubiquity of credit cards, customers are less likely to carry cash. The future of Google Wallet is evolving (not out in the United States yet) and it will make it even easier for customers to pay without cash.

Traditional methods of accepting credit cards involves setting up merchant services with your bank, which can be complicated, with lots of hidden fees; but when it comes to accepting a credit card payment directly on your smart phone, you have more options these days.

The best known options are Square and Intuit GoPayment. These direct merchant to business services provide small credit card scanners for free when you sign up for a new account. Each scanner simply plugs into your iPhone, iPad's or Android smartphone's audio jack. (BlackBerry devices, Windows devices, non-mobile devices, such as laptop and desktop computers and 10-inch Android tablets are currently incompatible)

Each service offers apps for iOS (iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad) as well as for Android. Intuit's GoPayment also supports some BlackBerry phones.



Since the devices plug into the headphone port, they are compatible with almost any phone that can run the app. Each service is easy to set up and a simple fixed-percentage fee and no separate transaction fee.

Hardware

The compactness of the Square Card Reader, one inch tall and by 1.6” from top to bottom, and 0.4” deep, with a redesigned headphone plug that is compatible with any iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad. The tiny size of the reader sometimes makes it difficult to hold steady while swiping.



The Intuit GoPayment reader is larger and has a much longer slot for swiping a card. It comes in a plastic case with a lanyard already attached. It also offers less resistance, so cards glide through. Compatible with iPhones and limited Android phone systems. You can attach a lanyard or key ring to either the device, and not included at purchase.

Costs, Fees and Contract Terms

One of the most appealing aspects of Square and Intuit GoPayment is that, unlike traditional credit card processors, Square and GoPayment credit card processing has only one fee: the processing fee of the transaction. There are no other fees that are typical of credit card processing, such as activation fees, monthly fees, gateway fees, PCI Compliance fees, downgrade fees and early termination fees. Square has no additional monthly fees whatsoever as well as no monthly minimum processing fees.

With Square, merchants have two pricing options: first, pay a single flat rate of 2.75% for swiped transactions and 3.5% + \$0.15 per manually

continued on page 12

entered transactions (each). Or, pay a flat monthly fee of \$275 and 0% on swiped transactions up to \$250,000 in processing per year.

Square, uses the same processing rate for all card types, (Mastercard, Visa, Discover and Amex) GoPayment actually has two tiers for swiped transactions. The fine print indicates that the 2.7% fee is actually reserved for Visa and MasterCard “Qualified” cards, which are typically personal credit/debit cards that do not have a rewards or miles program attached to them.

GoPayment does not list exactly which card types it considers to be “Qualified.” The second tier has a rate of 3.7% for swiped transactions and applies to “Non-Qualified” cards. GoPayment defines “Non-Qualified” as “corporate cards, foreign cards, and transactions that do not meet Visa/MC/Discover Network requirements for the best interchange program.” There is no mention of whether rewards/miles cards fall into the “Non-Qualified” category, which seems to indicate that they fall into the “Qualified” tier. These tier distinctions are important because a high percentage of credit cards have rewards programs attached to them.

GoPayment credit card processing is quoted at a flat fee of 2.75% per swiped transaction like Square’s 2.75%. Just like Square, GoPayment’s fee is higher when transactions are credit card numbers are typed into the phone rather than swiped through the reader, coming in at 3.75%. At first glance it appears that the companies are using the same pricing model and that GoPayment offers a very slight savings for swiped transactions. Upon digging deeper, we found that there is more to GoPayment’s pricing.

Although GoPayment has a month-to-month service agreement with no cancellation fee, the company does assess an annual PCI Compliance fee that varies based upon transaction volume (\$35 for 1-24 annual transactions, \$50 for 25-99, and \$100 for 100+). GoPayment offers another tier of pricing for merchants with moderate-to-high transaction volume.

For GoPayment, a monthly fee of \$12.95, merchants can get a lower “Qualified” swipe rate of 1.75% with the “Non-Qualified” rate staying the same.

GoPayment merchants that wish to take American Express or JCB cards will need to set up separate AMEX and JCB merchant accounts, which is typical in the credit card processing industry. These accounts can easily be set up during the GoPayment signup process, or by visiting the companies’ respective websites at a later date. Square does not need separate setup to accept American Express.

If you are paying more than 2.75% for processing and do more than \$10,000 a month in sales, you are either in a shady industry or you are getting ripped off.

Deposits

Both apps transfer money automatically into your registered bank account. Intuit takes that information at sign-up and treats each credit card transaction as a bank transfer, promising funds in your account within two or three business days. Square pulls money into your Square account, and, after verifying your bank account, pays out every evening.



Cards Not Present

For manually entered payments, Square has an initial weekly deposit limit. It places a hold on funds of card-not-present sales for 30 days if more than \$2,002 is charged within any rolling seven day period. This means that if merchants key in \$2,100 in sales within a seven-day period (either in a single transaction or in multiple transactions), the extra \$98 (\$2,100 – \$2,002 = \$98) will be held by Square for 30 days.

Deposit limit can be increased with by calling/emailing customer support

GoPayment does not have a card-not-present transaction limit like Square does. GoPayment is also much more transparent about processing limits and notifies merchants what their limits are in their online dashboards. Merchants who will have high processing volumes or high ticket sales (\$5,000+/mo or \$500+/sale) will want to contact GoPayment to get higher processing limits.

Sign-Up and Setup

Signing up for the Square reader was fast and easy. The company requires only an email address and a password, and a mailing address for sending the reader. You are able to take payments right away, and don't need to submit bank information until ready to start pulling money out. After verifying your bank account, Square automatically deposits transactions each evening.

The Intuit setup required much more information up front--including bank account details and credit report questions. Account can be approved within a few hours, and the card reader was in the mail the next day.

Setup with both devices is as simple as installing the appropriate app from the marketplace and plugging the scanner into the headphone port. However, you will have to go into the GoPayment settings and tell it whether you're using the audio-jack scanner or a Bluetooth scanner--and turn up the volume.

Security and Support

Square is PCI-compliant and VeriSign trusted. Square is transparent about security, and you can read more about the methods the company uses to keep your information secure at the Square website. The service will export your transaction history as a CVS spreadsheet for import into the tracking software of your choice.

GoPayment can do transactions in QuickBooks. As the parent company, it offers the option to import

GoPayment transactions into QuickBooks, in addition to offering a CVS export and it is also PCI-compliant, with similar encryption standards to Square's.

Square: With Square, there actually is no telephone support offered with the device, meaning one-on-one and fast support can be hard to find when you need it most. Instead, Square offers a Twitter account you can request help through, as well as a knowledge base and an expedited email service. While this is certainly satisfactory access, and we love it when companies head to Twitter to talk with customers, it doesn't replace the fast and personal experience phone support offers.

GoPayment offers a dedicated telephone customer support line and on-line troubleshooting guide.

Receipts

The most innovative features of Square and Intuit GoPayment's mobile-payment system are its ability to issue digital receipts. Once the customer's card has been swiped, they can sign their name on the screen with their finger or special pen or you can tap a key for "signature not needed".

Once the customer's credit card transaction has been approved and processed, the small-business owner may ask the customer

for an email address and send the receipt electronically. Paper receipts are more time consuming. For Square and Wi-Fi printing

capability, you should be able to print directly from the smart phone or iPad. With GoPayment, it requires you to log-in to business account and searching date and amount of transaction, then sending it to an "air" printer or to a Bluetooth mobile printer.



Resources: digitaltrends.com; square.com; gopayment.com; pcworld.com; ilounge.com/reviews

**THE
BIG
E**



A special thanks goes to John Coward, Kathy Kogurt, and Tory for overseeing the success of this year's Big E booth. And, to all the volunteers who set up, manned the booth, judged contests, manned the booth or gave a helping hand. Thank you from the NECTA and the Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association.

Christmas Tree & Wreath Contest Winners

Grand Champion

Hemlock Hill Tree Farm- CT

Species

Balsam Fir

Reserve Champion

Seekonk Tree Farm- MA

Blue Spruce

2nd Reserve Champion

Cranston's Tree Farm –MA

White Pine

State Champions

NH	Nichols Tree Farm	Fir
MA	Pierce's Tree Farm	Fir
CT	Hemlock Hill Tree Farm	Fir
RI	Henry's Tree Farm	Fir

Fir Contestants

1 st	Hemlock Hill Tree Farm	CT	BF/FF
2 nd	Pierce's Tree Farm	MA	Balsam
3 rd	Cranston's Tree Farm	MA	Concolor
4 th	Henry's Tree Farm	RI	Fraser
5 th	Crane Hill Tree Farm	MA	Balsam
6 th	Nichols Tree Farm	NH	Balsam
7 th	Nims Tree Farm	MA	Canaan

Spruce Contestants

1 st	Seekonk Tree Farm	MA
2 nd	Angevine Farm	CT
3 rd	Coward Tree Farm	MA
4 th	Sweet Scapes Tree	MA
5 th	Hickory Ridge Tree Farm	CT
6 th	Henry's Tree Farm	RI
7 th	Spruce Hill Farms	CT

Pine Contestants

1 st	Cranston's Tree Farm	MA
2 nd	Angevine Farm	CT
3 rd	Hickory Ridge Tree Farm	CT
4 th	Sweet Scapes	MA
5 th	Evergreen Tree Farm	MA
6 th	Spruce Hill Farms	CT
7 th	Seekonk Tree Farm	MA
8 th	Henry's Tree Farm	RI



Wreaths - Decorated

1 st	Nichols Tree Farm	NH
2 nd	Ellsworth Tree Farm	MA
3 rd	Indian Rock Farm	MA
4 th	Cranston's Tree Farm	MA



Wreaths- Undecorated

1 st	Indian Rock Farm	MA
2 nd	Ellsworth Tree Farm	MA
3 rd	Nichols Tree Farm	NH
4 th	Cranston's Tree Farm	MA

Highlights of MCTA Annual Meeting August 25, 2013



Jim & Ellen Colburn doing a great job checking everyone in.



The crowd takes a climbing tour of the site



A welcoming sign to all visitors



Challenges in low lying areas



Dr. Nick Brazee and Dr. Besty Lamb discussing beyond tree science.



Great food for all



"and the winner is??" A great raffle run by Jim Colburn



The giant pumpkin patch



Digging up for profit



Gloria having fun with the "girls" in the alternative program



Wet or dry, lots of diverse conditions to on this site



Peter Sweet Sr. explaining the intricate dynamics of the soil, land and underground GIS surveys

2013 Annual Meeting Highlights at Seekonk Tree Farm Great Barrington, Ma

Pete Sweet showed us the importance of soil maps in dealing with the challenges of diverse slopes, wet & dry land, and a variety of species. Using this knowledge of drainage patterns, soil conditions in different areas of the property, grassy waterways as well as seasonal water marks aided him in making smart decisions for effective production and growth of his crop. Demonstration of the tree spade to dig test holes and help us see the seasonal high water mark and compare it to the soil survey. Cross checked maps, found they were right on and the roots stopped at the A good example of soil types showed the brown/gray meet look to see if water is coming for the bottom of the hole or off the top layer--the gray layer is where the roots stop, oxygen is the biggest deficiency, many field where farming has taken place are very compacted . Planting Berkey Nursery stock, they feel that he needed a minimum of 12"well-drained soil for

oxygen. However, trees will start to die when in water for 5 days.

A review of the damage Hurricane Irene caused in August 2011 caused five –seven foot Canaan that were healthy died or simple drowned. Irene dropped 4.56 inches of rain within a week. A second tropical storm Lee droppws 6.21 inches of rain, equaling 10.77 inches of rain in two weeks in the poorly drained area. This resulted in the loss of some 5-7 ft. trees. They had harvested trees in these marginal areas in previous years. Hurricane Sandy hit on October 29, 30, 2012 wind actually tipped many 3-4 footers with gale force winds.

Spring of 2013 another wet spell following a very dry spell ,14.12 inches of rain over 25 days, was not as destructive as 2011but it is believed it resulted in the death of many transplants in wet areas and ones that may have been in auger holes. Peter has certainly has his challenges in a short period of time!

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Catalog #23



Christmas in February

By Ken Rozzen of Ken's Tree Farm, Warren, Ma

Last Christmas was like so many from the past. So many families picking out their trees, and seeing the children grow up a little more every year is always a treat. The season came to a close like many before, no more people wandering through the trees while laughing and joking about past Christmas trees that were way too big for their home. But now it's time for the deer, turkeys and wildlife to take the farm back over. It's kind of bitter sweet, no more customers talking about a whole year's worth of events. The busy time stops and there's an eerie silence in the fields.

Then on December 29th 2012, the unthinkable happened. I got a call from a neighbor that my barn was on fire. They called the fire department and the first fire truck got there in less than fifteen minutes, which to me felt like an hour. As I watched years of memories go up in flames, I could only think of where the darn cat that adopted me only a few weeks before was hiding. As the fire consumed the building I built with my dad nearly 25 years earlier, I couldn't help but think about how I could ever replace what this barn meant to me.

The fire department put out the flames and determined the cause to be the wood stove (this was later confirmed by a fire investigator). Early the next morning as I was looking through the rubble I heard a noise. Well, low and behold that little feral cat was foraging through the burnt out structure! I was sure glad to see he was safe, just a little cold, hungry, and scared.

Over the next few weeks I picked through what was left of my barn and actually thought about throwing in the towel. After all I have a full time job, and who cares if another Christmas tree farm closes down? But as I tried to salvage some of my memories from the ashes, I began to remember some of the big smiling faces of the kids when they climbed up onto the Polaris Ranger for their ride back from the field, kind of like being on Santa's sleigh.

Now it's time to tear down the old and build the new. I was amazed at how much help I was offered, yeah! One neighbor offered to help me clean out all the metal and copper wire so he could scrap it. Another asked me what I was going to do with the three cords of wood I had left. He said, "Well, if you're not going to need it, I'll pick it up and get it out of here for nothing." Nice guy! I then I hinted around to some fellow co-workers and friends that I was gearing up to take the old building down and I sure wouldn't mind some help. Winter must be a real busy time of year for everybody because no one was too willing to jump on board for this dirty job. I don't even want to get started about the insurance company.



By the time February rolled around I got a dumpster to begin dismantling the building myself. It was then that I realized how well my dad and I constructed the barn. We built it from native pine that I had milled at a local sawmill.

At this point I wasn't going to ask anyone

else for help, but then my old friends that come by every year at Christmas; Kristin, Rick, and their boys Andrew and Riley called to see how the rest of the Christmas season went (by the way the boys call me Uncle Ken, how cool is that?) So, I told them what happened. When they heard that this landmark that their children had grown up with burnt down, they asked me if there was anything they could do to help out. At first, I declined, but Rick texted me later and said he knew it was going to be a big job and really thought I could use the help. Reluctantly, I took him up on his offer.



Now there's a brand new barn, which is quite the upgrade, and that little cat is no longer feral (his name is Buddy). I'll never forget the memories that the old barn

held. Most of all, I'll always remember that Christmas present an old friend gave me in February.

NATIONAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2012

PRE-CUT VS CUT YOUR OWN

% of Real Trees Purchased	
Pre-Cut	85%
Cut Your Own	14%

CHRISTMAS TREE RETAIL VALUES

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Avg/Tree	\$36.50	\$40.92	\$36.12	\$34.87	\$41.30
Total in (Billions)	1.03	1.15	.98	1.08	1.01

*Figures are from annual consumer tracking poll by NCTA

Mean average dollars spent is NOT a measurement of the average price/cost of trees, only on consumers polled.

CHRISTMAS TREE PURCHASES 2008-2012 in Millions

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Real	28.2	28.2	27.0	30.8	24.5
Fake	11.7	11.7	8.2	9.5	10.9

WHERE PEOPLE BUY REAL CHRISTMAS TREES

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Choose & Cut Farm	31%	32%	33%	31%	24%
Nursery/Garden Center	11%	10%	12%	15%	11%
Chain Store	24%	20%	21%	16%	24%
Retail Lot	7%	17%	13%	14%	15%
Non-Profit Group	18%	13%	9%	13%	15%
Other	9%	8%	12%	11%	11%

*As seen here, location of Real Tree purchases can vary year to year.

Source: Consumer Surveys commissioned by NCTA conducted by Harris Interactive. All results have an error range of +/- 3.1%

The following Sunday he showed up at 7 a.m. and it was cold, overcast, and there was a little snow coming down. Despite the weather, the two of us cut, hammered, and pushed down what was left. We then loaded what we could into the thirty yard dumpster, then burnt a lot in the wood stove that we moved outside of the building. In about eleven hours we got rid of the whole thing, except for the concrete slab. It was a lot of heavy, dirty work and I was very grateful for his help. At the end of the day I tried to pay Rick for the work he had done, and the time he had spent. He laughed and said "That's what friends do!" Afterward, I thought, here's a friend that I only see a couple times a year and at Christmas with his family, willing to give me a whole Sunday of labor while his wife and kids were at home. So here it is, September, and I haven't seen Rick since that Sunday in February although we have texted a few times.

Barn Fire at Wilson Farm in Litchfield, New Hampshire

By Jake Berry and Reprinted from The Telegraph, Nashua, NH. 03/24/13

By KIMBERLY HOUGHTON Union Leader Correspondent 03/24/13;10/28/13

March 22, 2013 LITCHFIELD – Nearly 50 years after a fire destroyed a barn at Wilson Farms, a three alarm fire engulfs the Wilson Farm structure on Friday, March 22, 2013.

The barn caught fire, destroying crops, seeds and everything the farm needs to remain in operation. No people or animals were hurt in the fire, which engulfed the barn on the farm's northern side. But the structure, rebuilt after a blaze in the 1960s, suffered serious structural damage.

"It was about 50 years ago the last time this happened. Now, we're here again," Jim Wilson, one of the farm's owners said "We hope it won't take long to get back up and running."

The main farm stand, growing fields and greenhouses were not damaged in the fire, initially reported around 9:30. And workers managed to remove tractors and other major equipment stored in the building before the fire caught fully, said Kevin Simpson, the farm's maintenance manager.

"There were some pumps, some other tools in there," Simpson said. "Nothing too big." Still, it will take time to repair the barn, which is considered a "50 percent loss," fire officials said.

About 10 neighbors who gathered around the farm Friday shared rumors that the blaze started as a car fire. Others questioned whether fire crews had access to enough water to battle the blaze,

Early on, some tankers ran out of water, said Telegraph photographer Bob Hammerstrom, who described the blaze as "the biggest fire" he has seen in 20 years in the news business.



"We come here all the time. They have great corn. It's always so fresh," said Megan Laine, who lives across the street on Snowdrop Lane.

"They're a great family, a big part of the community," said Mark DiFazio, another neighbor, who said he often brings his children for the farm's horse rides, among other events. "Thank God it's only the barn."

By 11:30 a.m., the smoke plumes, which had started as dark, heavy pyres, had thinned to light trails. The stretch of Route 3A around the farm remained closed to traffic. As firefighters started to leave the scene, farm crews began to move equipment and assess the damage.

Fifty years ago the fire leveled the barn

after a spark lit a pile of hay. The owners are hopeful they may be able to salvage the building this time.

"We'll have to see," Wilson said. "It's insured, so that should help. It'll take us time" to reopen. "We're hoping it won't take too long." "You don't realize what has happened for really a couple of days. Then you start trying to put stuff together and you find there's nothing left," said Don Wilson, owner of Wilson Farms.

For Wilson, it's not just part of his business that went up in smoke, it's the memories too. Since the 1960s, Wilson's family operated Wilson farms in Litchfield.

"When you go back that many generations, it's in your blood," he said. Wilson said he is grateful no one was injured and no animals were hurt.

The building's primary use was for storing winter vegetables, housing equipment, as well as washing and packing produce. Chemicals and pesticides were housed in another building.

The fire destroyed thousands of dollars in equipment, including four tractors, a truck, as well as produce and seeds.

"We haven't (got) a pencil to write on a piece of paper. We haven't got a hammer to drive a nail. It goes from there all the way down the line," Wilson said.

Wilson said the fire did approximately \$1 million in damage.

"Everybody has been so helpful. Neighbors and people we didn't know came in. People who had trucking companies said,

'If you need anything, take one of our trucks,'" Wilson said.

October 28, 2013: A new maintenance barn was constructed over the past several months, and opened for operations about two weeks ago. It serves as the command center for the farm's daily operations, as well as a workshop area.

"We still might not have everything, but this is a good start," said Lemire, explaining the new barn was a necessary step in moving forward and getting past the disappointment from earlier this year.

Donald Wilson, owner of Wilson Farm, said the new barn is about 6,000-square-foot, and slightly larger than the barn that was destroyed in the fire, although it is only a single-story structure.

"This has been a long struggle for us. It seems like it has been forever," said Wilson. "It was a very rough summer for everybody, as we lost everything in the fire."

Wilson said he is thrilled to have the new barn finally available for extra cooling for the crops, a storage area for equipment and a break room for employees. The new barn was built with concrete and insulated blocks to make the structure as fire-resistant as possible, according to Wilson.

The process was more expensive than expected, and insurance did not cover all of the costs, he said.

"Everybody was very cooperative throughout all of this. But now we are really looking forward to just starting over," said Wilson.



M.C.T.A. MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

October 9, 2013

Chicopee, MA: Attendance: Rob Leab, President, opened the meeting at 6:15 P.M. In attendance were Dan and Kathy Pierce, Tom and Cynthia Cranston, Joe Meichelbeck, Seth Cranston, Greg Davagian, Gloria Ellsworth, Larry Flaccus, Joyce Leitl, Susan Lopes, Carol Nims, Casey Vandervalk, Dave Morin, John Coward, Peter Sweet and Jim Colburn.

President Rob Leab: The minutes of the July 2013 meeting were approved as printed..

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Joe Meichelbeck reviewed YTD spending against the 2014 budget. A higher cash balance and reduced spending YTD were attributed to timing. The 2014 budget is on track. After a motion and a second, the Treasurer's report was accepted.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Secretary Jim Colburn reported that all except four paid registrants for the annual meeting in August were in attendance. After discussion it was decided to replace at no cost several signs lost in a member's barn fire last December. The Secretary reported on a communication received from a land owner interested in an association with a Christmas tree grower in western Massachusetts. The Board suggested the best way to reach current growers was to advertise in "Shearings" and asked the Secretary to relay that information. After a motion and second, the Secretary's report was accepted.

NECTA & BIG E: John Coward handed out ribbons from the recent Big E tree and wreath contests and reported it was a good fair with good weather and attendance. Peter Sweet noted that there were 24 trees exhibited. There was discussion on prize money, the need to have an activity to attract fairgoers to the Christmas tree exhibit and ideas on a new building for the site. Tom Cranston agreed to contact Tom Rathier (Ct.) to discuss.

MDAR & GOV News Jeb Brackbill's Crane Neck Tree Farm in West Newbury was selected as the site for the annual tree cutting ceremony with the Agriculture Resource Commissioner on "Green Friday."

MARKETING/ WEBSITE: Gloria and Rick LeBlanc have been working to make the website more user friendly. Gloria presented a redesigned version of the Association logo currently appearing on the website. She explained and previewed recent changes which included red and green category boxes, rewording, resizing and presenting **Wholesalers** as a separate category to make it easier to find. A red border was added. It's a different look so any input or reaction to the changes would be helpful.

MEMBERSHIP. Jim Colburn reports the Association currently has 117 members.

"SHEARINGS" Gloria Ellsworth reported for the November issue, a one-time 10% off special to new advertisers was being offered. She stated we currently have less advertisers, despite efforts to generate more vendors. She outlined the additional work required to produce both a hardcopy printed version as well as the electronic version of the newsletter. Transition to electronic only "Shearings" will begin in 2014. To help Gloria, Carol Nims volunteered to proofread.

OLD Business Tom Cranston will also inquire in his talk with Tom Rathier as to any opportunities to hold joint meetings with Connecticut. It was reported that based on an inquiry after the recent NYS Christmas Tree meeting attended by some Massachusetts growers, Massachusetts will accept documentation from other states related to Pesticide continuing education credits.

Thank you Susan Lopes and The Paul Bunyan Farm and Nursery for hosting the meeting.

Meeting notes submitted by Jim Colburn, Secretary MCTA



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Submission Deadlines

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

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Click on “ Educational Materials”*

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Size	Dimensions	One (1) Issue	Two (2) Issues	1 Yr.- (4) Issues
Full Page	7.5" w x 10" h	\$ 86.00	\$ 162.00	\$ 304.00
2/3 Page	7.5" w x 6 ¾ " h	68.00	128.00	246.00
1/2 Page - Horizontal	7.5" w x 5" h	48.00	90.00	172.00
- Vertical	3.5" w x 10" h	48.00	90.00	172.00
1/4 Page	3 5/8" w x 5" h	32.00	56.00	104.00
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Business Card	3 ½ " w x 2" h	20.00	38.00	74.00
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For more information and details or questions please contact: Gloria Ellsworth (508) 393-6479

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