



# Christmas Tree Newsletter

May-June 2016

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## Christmas Trees & the Fire Code in North Carolina

Last October I received a call from one of our Jackson County growers inquiring about the Fire code within NC and Jackson County. Below is information based on conversations with NCDA & CS and Jackson County's Fire Marshall.

NC has a fire code prohibiting cut/dead Christmas trees within business buildings. This does not include homes. Exceptions to this state-wide fire code include:

- \* If the business has a sprinkler system, then cut ('dead) trees are allowed.
- \* If the tree is treated with a fire retardant, however this severely dries the cut tree(s) out.
- \* If the Christmas tree is a "live" tree, then the code does not apply.

Most folks get around the code by using live trees with a relatively small to partial root ball. Live trees are allowed within hotels, business' churches etc....

Results from the above were from conversation with Bill Glenn, NCDA Christmas Tree Marketing Specialist and Michael Forbes Jackson County Fire Marshall 828 586 7507.

## \$3,000 or \$6,000 Grants for your Farm WNC AG Options

Are you thinking about expanding your farm to include e.g., seedling production, diversifying into raising cattle, or pursuing new marketing avenues but lack the monies to do so? Then consider applying to WNC AG Options for potential grant monies. Applications for the early 2017 season will be available this fall in September to early October.

I know the fall is a busy time of year as you gear up for the harvest season and so working on an application is nearly impossible! Don't let this be a deterrent. Our Extension office can help you through the process now. Together we'll go over and look at the questions from a 2016 application. If you desire to apply or would like more information about this process, contact Christy Bredenkamp at 586-4009 or 488-3848, or visit [www.wncagoptions.org](http://www.wncagoptions.org)



## Snippets from the Growers Panels at the NCCTA Winter Meeting

### Grower Panel Discussion - Christmas Tree Industry Outlook

*Organized by Bill Glenn, NCDA & CS Christmas Tree Marketing Specialist*

- \* In 2015, the weather presented challenges with a lot of mud, rain, wet cloths & palletizing issues.
- \* 2015 sales were about the same as in 2014.
- \* Retail stores went up in their prices so wholesale prices went up by the growers.
- \* Some growers were short of trees on their orders with new and or late calls.
- \* Already this year, some growers have taken orders in January for the 2016 harvest season.
- \* Most buyers know trees will go up at least \$2-3 dollars, while the growers desire \$3-5 more!
- \* Care is needed in an undersupply year... the potential exists to lose customers due to lack of inventory and or if prices are too high, folks may feel they are being gouged.
- \* In oversupply years i.e., 2008, 2009 etc., growers were begging the customers and grateful for orders. In an undersupply, it's an opportunity to weed out some of the "thorny customers."
- \* A supply shortage may last about 6-7 years.
- \* It's important to up the prices of your lower grades.
- \* The demand and price of greenery is going up because less material is available for greenery along with hidden costs. So prices are going up!
- \* There are varying ways growers collect money such as: personal guarantees, contracts, taking deposits and pay-up front.
- \* Some growers are writing letters to customers saying trees will be short, prices will be going up and asking if folks would get their orders in early. One grower has 75% of his orders in already. Another set a deadline to get orders in by July 1st to determine if he can take new orders.
- \* Bill Glenn, NCDA Marketing Specialist says 2016 is a sellers year! 7-8's & 8-9's will be in short supply and suggested going up no more than 15% in price.

### Grower Panel Discussion - Outlook Over the Next Few to 10 years



- \* Seedling shortage! Seen it this year (2016) & will see it next year (2017).. more years?
- \* If Seedling supply is tight., will impact available trees in 6-7 years.
- \* Greenhouses are popping up everywhere and established seedling growers are ramping up.
- \* Saw an increase in sales of 5-6 ft. trees, so may see this 5-10 years down the road and may see more and more 5-6 ft. trees being sold.
- \* Box stores sell a lot of 5-6 ft. trees.
- \* Retail lots closed early this year due to shortage of trees and so customers impacted may stop growing live trees or switch to plastic.
- \* The new check-off program may be a game changer to take trees from the artificial industry.
- \* Land availability may limit opportunities to expand Christmas tree farms.
- \* Since the recession, many tree farms are now raising cattle instead of trees (Avery Co).
- \* Now that it is a grower's market, some of the larger growers are willing to say to their troublesome customers "we don't have enough trees" as an opportunity to weed then out.
- \* Avery County observed about 10-15% of a tree shortage.
- \* Growers talked about continuing to increase tree prices if feasible but not to gauge!
- \* Noble firs on the west coast went for \$34/tree for a 7-8 ft sized tree.
- \* Customers are slowly moving to less dense trees.

# FIT Test– Medical Exams & WPS Update

## Changes to the Worker Protection Standards are forthcoming in 2 phases.

*Phase 1 by January 1, 2017 and phase 2 by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2018.*

**Workers** must go through training if a pesticide has been applied within a **30 day period**. If longer than 30 days after application then WPS training is not necessary.

**Notification Site** - now **Safety Data Sheets** (SDS) will need to be at Central Notification site(s).

### Respirators – FIT Test & Medical Exams

- **FIT test** will be necessary for workers and farmers (you) if wearing a respirator or dust mask. If worn even though the label does not call for one a fit test must still be done. Begins January 1, 2017.
- Farmer can FIT test himself.
- **A medical exam** form must be obtained from a doctor or online (3M) to ok the use of a respirator. The online website is <https://www.respexam.com/Default.asp> (fee of ~\$25 or so).
- Fit test is performed **1/year**
- Medical Exam is performed **1/lifetime** unless health changes with you or your worker.

**Application Exclusion Zone or AEZ** is a range on each plot where pesticides are applied. A safety zone needs to be set in place in case other workers are in field. 0 ft. – 100 ft. depending on pesticide and nozzles.

**Provide 1 gallon** water for each worker & **3 gallons/handler** measured at beginning of work period.

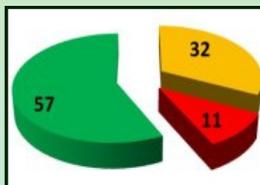
**Eye wash – 1 pt. of water per handler** needs to come from a device that applies to eyes. Can use only one applicator but need the amount of pints for each worker present.

## 2015 Tree Trunk Study -Jeff Owen NCSU Christmas Tree Specialist

The 2015 harvest season was mild to say the least with lots of rain! The wet weather before and during harvest delayed dormancy creating problems with trees overheating when stored on pallets, in horizontal piles and even vertically under shade trees. Damage with some growers was observed in browning and needle retention issues.



Last October, Jeff conducted a tree trunk paint study building from the previous years work in 2014. Here's a quick summary. Trees were harvested October 6th and underwent 5 treatments which included a check, 1 or 2 coats of Latex paint, Anchor seal wax emulsion and a spray can latex coating paint. Cracks were looked at right after harvest and then again around Oct 12. Additionally, twig samples were taken on 250 trees. Generally, moisture went down some, but uniformly together. The percent of trees with or without cracks were:



**32% - end cracks**  
**11% - end and side cracks**  
**57% – no cracks**

	End Crack	Side Crack
check	16	3
spray can	15	4
1x latex	14	5
2x latex	12	3
<b>AnchorSeal</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>

On Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, 150 1 inch disc samples were taken at fresh weight then dried to calculate moisture content. The focus was on the check and the anchor seal. The Anchor seal was able to hold 30% moisture over the check. Anchor seal did reduce cracks; while the latex treatments did not work as well in the 2015 study as it did in 2014.

## Jills Corner - Sivanto and Elongate Hemlock Scale

**Sivanto** a new insecticide on the block, now has a 24-c label (2016) and is a systemic insecticide similar to neonicotinoids but with a different chemistry. With Sivanto, insects will stop feeding but you will not observe a quick kill so be patient and wait for its effects. Jill sees using Sivanto (**pros**): for twig aphid control as another insecticide to rotate with, does not smell like Dimethoate, and safe for bees, predators and parasitic wasps! The **cons** are: unsure for the potential with mistblower applications, potential for spider mite issues, and the need to wear a respirator. The rate for Sivanto is ~10 1/2 oz./acre of a cost of \$28-30/acre.

**Elongate Hemlock Scale (EHS)** was found on inspected Fraser fir trees by the Florida Dept of Agriculture this past 2015 harvest season. Subsequently, Jill visited several lots and found quite a bit more. Jill suggests sending clean trees to Florida and the trees that have scale to other locations.

**Treating for EHS** – know that it is very hard to control. Cryptomeria is easy to control but if you wait it will kill the trees! When spraying consider coverage is vital for control so spray until the needles get wet and pay attention to volume of water per tree, water droplet size, amount of time per tree and pressure!

**Update** on our friendly **parasitic wasp** that helps keep EHS at bay.. through Jill's scouting efforts last year she learned that what you spray before bud break will not hurt the parasitic wasp as it's not out there until May - mid October. So what you spray in the summer and the fall will impact this beneficial wasp!



Sincerely,  
**Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent  
Agriculture-Horticulture**



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