



TREEmendous News



Florida Christmas Tree Association's Newsletter

August 2017

Linda Songer, Editor

FCTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET ON JULY 28

On July 28, 2017, the BOD Meeting was held at the home of Jack (Past President) and Judy Ewing. Present were Michael (President) & Linda Songer, John (Treasurer) and Cathie (Director) Gregory, Bob (Director) and Joyce Neilson, and Tom & Jodi Utsman.

We decided to have a Spring Meeting, tentative April 7, 2018, rather than a Fall Meeting in 2017. We used to have a Fall Meeting in Sept. or Oct.; however, several of our members are now selling pumpkins, which conflicts with our former dates. We discussed Aug. but that is very hot for farm tours. Perhaps next year we could meet in early Sept.

We discussed the need to appeal to new growers to join the FCTA, and the need to turn over Officer and Director positions to the next generation. Our membership is getting older, and some are planning to close their farms in the next few years. To start this transition we are nominating Jodi Utsman, to be our new President. Michael Songer will fill the Past President's place on the BOD and continue with the Association.

We ask the members to review the Ballot for Nominated Officers, which will be attached to the TreeMendous News, and return the ballot by email to Songerma@hotmail.com or by mail to Michael Songer, 443 Cody Drive, Orange Park, FL 32073. We will also ask for suggestions on programs, articles, and recommendations for future officers.

Michael A. Songer, President, for Sue Kossuth, Secretary. July 28, 2017



FIND BALLOT ON LAST PAGE!

**Jodi Utsman, Nominee for FCTA President
and Current President Michael Songer**

**Florida Christmas Tree Association
Officers and Board**

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Southern Christmas Tree Association & Georgia Christmas Tree Association Meeting

August 5 & 6, 2017 in Lanett, Alabama.

Jodi & Tom Utsman and Michael & Linda Songer, traveled up through the country to visit the Combined Southern Christmas Tree Association and Georgia Christmas Tree Association Annual Meeting held in Valley, Alabama. The Southern Christmas Tree Association is the combined Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana Associations.

We saw some old friends including Wesley Bass, former SAJE salesperson, who used to visit our meetings in Florida and Georgia. He has remarried after his first wife died and is concentrating on his poultry business. We met Kevin Steele who has purchased Wesley's Saje business. His web site is www.steelessaje.com. If you are looking for Saje parts you can contact Kevin.

Clarke Gernon of Shady Pond Tree Farm, Gray Anderson of Grant Christmas Tree Farm, and Dr. John Frampton, Professor/Christmas Tree Geneticist, NCSU, are working on a project called , **"The Hunt for a Disease Resistant Leyland."** They have made selections of resistant trees, produced cuttings, and have test planting plots with the selections and normal Leyland Cypress. This is a little more technical than I can cover, but they seem to be on a path of some success. To me, this seems to be a similar approach to Bill Murray's selections, which several nurseries are using in Georgia. The important thought is that there is serious work being done to develop a select Leyland without the disease problems.

On Saturday afternoon we visited the Gilbert Christmas Tree Farm owned by Ray & Joan Gilbert near Lanett, Alabama. See www.gilbertreefarm.com. Ray is the President of the Southern Christmas Tree Association. The farm is difficult to find, but they have beautiful Leylands which they sell along with imported Frasier Firs.

On Sunday we visited the Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm, 80 miles to the south, owned by Frank & Lucie Wadsworth near Wetumpka, Alabama. See www.wadsworthchristmastrees.com. Frank began as a bookkeeper for his father-in-law in the gas & fuel oil business and several other businesses. One day his father-in-law took him to a cleared field, gave him a CCC Dibble and 2,000 trees, and told him to start planting.

Both of these farms are beautiful and well run operations. Neither is on a major road, and both have a long gravel lane to get to the farm. They both have lush Leylands and Virginia Pines. They may have better soil, but both use fertilizer , and they trim frequently. In Florida we were originally told pines don't require fertilizer. This may have been true for long standing timber, but I think we in Florida need to consider the use of fertilizer, especially after several rotations. I wish some of you would send me your opinions on this and your suggestion for a good speaker on this topic, perhaps for our Spring Meeting in April.

I observed that both farms had placed their drill machine in a hole with cement or block sides and a drain in the bottom. This would lessen the need to lift trees up for drilling. You learn something from each meeting. We enjoyed our trip.

Report by Michael Songer, FCTA President



Shearing Equipment



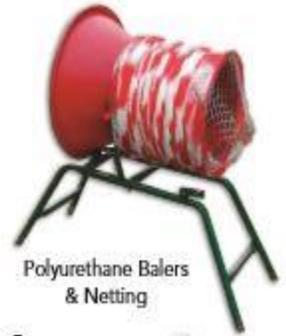
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SEEDLINGS ALERT 2017

Superior Nursery at Lee, Florida. Phone 850-971-5159 They have increased the cost of bare root Southern Red Cedar to (\$260..per thousand) . They have Sand Pine, and Virginia Pine seedlings (\$110. per thousand.) and Spruce Pine (\$130. Per thousand) available for the Fall Season. All seedlings have increased \$.01 from last year. One gallon cedars are \$3.25 each.

Dwight Stansel Farm & Nursery, 5553 164th St, Wellborn, FL 32094, Phone 386-963-2827, e-mail dsfntte@windstream.net raises bare root Southern Red Cedar which they sell for \$250. per thousand.

The Division of Forestry--Andrews Nursery, Chiefland, FL, Phone 352-493-6096, will have bare root Sand Pine at \$50. per thousand.

Aucker's Nursery, Williston, FL, phone 352-528-3889, has very nice Leland Cypress liners. See the Web Site: www.auckersnursery.com for current prices, and detailed instructions on planting, fertilizing, and trimming Leland Cypress.

BK Cedars (Susan Kossuth), Alachua, FL Phone 386-462-2060 has a good supply of three gallon (\$6.) genetically improved Southern Red Cedar ('Robin Blue') suitable for initial or replacement planting. They also have some 7 gal sizes of Red Cedar. I get a few of these to sell to customers who are thinking of digging a small tree. It is easier than digging, and I plant whatever is left over. Michael

Byron Lakeview Nursery, 2149 Lakeview Rd, Byron, GA 31008 has Carolina Sapphires in 3" pots for \$1.10 (Think minimum is 100.) www.byronlakeviewnursery.com

FCTA Has Lost Another Long-time Member

Wil A. Sellars 1948 – 2017



We stopped at Wil Sellars farm near Tallahassee, on the way back from Alabama. I spoke with his wife Linda Sellars. Wil died on April 13, 2017, at the age of 68. Wil has delivered trees to the Governor and worked with us on the last meeting in Tallahassee. In addition to growing Christmas trees, he was a licensed pool contractor and owned and operated Pro Pools in Tallahassee for 45 years.



Sellars farm in Havana, FL

Aucker's Nursery

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We all know that the next generation of farmers is small, especially in Christmas tree growing. The Census of Agriculture's of 2012 shows that Florida mirrors the national trend with a current grower average age of 59.8 years. Florida growers make up 5.1% for ages 25 to 34. Almost 12% of growers make up ages between 35 and 44. Likewise, 32% are ages 55 to 64 and those 65 to 74 are 24%.

We can see from the above information that the outlook for younger people entering farming is bleak. This is particularly true for Christmas tree farming. There is a lot of work associated with Christmas tree production. There is one important benefit for farmers in the agricultural exemption related to our taxes but the future still looks grim.

The Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association has a special program entitled Emerging Leader Development Program. This organization selects 6 to 7 potential growers each year. According to one of their members, "We highly encourage ELDP members to become involved in our committees to engage them early in their career." Except for our children like Dean and Joyce Schnoor's farm (with Mike and Erica Kelly) and Jodi and Tom Utsman taking over the Christmas Tree farm of Jack and Judy Ewing, we might consider having our county agents work with professors of agriculture to develop a program for Christmas tree growing. This program would also have our future growers learn about Ag business and leadership. Also there is the American Farm Bureau Federation that might help get younger growers into Christmas tree production.

We also have northern trees that are brought into Florida. This might be a way we can survive our problem of getting younger people involved with growing Christmas trees. In order for them to get a tax break, they would have to plant a few Christmas trees on their farm. But bringing in northern trees could produce enough income for them to stay afloat. The youth could have a small acreage farm and also bring in the northern trees. The Neilson's are doing this already having produced sand pine on their farm. .

There are also federal grants we might apply for from the USDA that had \$2.5 million back in 2015, to expand farmer education. I believe that I read that a Christmas tree association in North Carolina got one back in 2015. This would have non-profit and universities develop a program for new and underserved farmers. The website for these grants is www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach.

Maybe we could have a speaker talk about the labor shortage at our next meeting. We would have to make certain that this person has knowledge of Christmas tree growing and selling so s/he can talk more intelligently about our shortage and what we might do.

We have a dire need for youthful people to come into the Christmas tree business. Maybe we can have a discussion about what we can do to get them involved with Christmas tree growing. This is a desperate challenge that we should take on.

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T. Jay Rolland from Kirk Company Demonstrated their Kolors at Alabama Meeting



Beginning the color application on a Leyland Cypress



Putting the finishing touches on the purple tree



They offer Kolors in Gold, Lt. Blue, Lt. Pink, Red, Black, Bright Pink, Dark Blue, Purple, White, Turquoise and more!

READY TO TRY SOMETHING NEW?

T. Jay Rolland from Kirk gave a demonstration of adding new fluorescent colors to trees in the field. The new colors are Pink, White, Red, Purple, Blue, Black, Turquoise, Gold, and more coming. See Pictures. This is rather new, and is easier than flocking. This is for customers that want to be on the newest edge. I wouldn't do a whole field, but doing a few trees per field would add interest, and probably get a newspaper article or TV advertising. This Kirk Colorant is different from Coty Color or Greenzit. The new colorants come in one and 2.5 gallon containers for about \$22. and \$54, respectively. The gallon covers only about 3 trees. The cost of materials for a 6.5 ft. tree would be at least \$7-10.

The new Colorants are made by Kirk, but Tim Mitchell (Craig Sorensen), Frasier Knoll (Tommy Wagoner), and Evans (Julie Holland) all carry the product. Evans sent me 2.5 gal and I received it in two days. Why not give it a try?.... Michael

FARM TOUR AT WADSWORTH'S IN WATUMPKA, ALABAMA



Trimming demonstration



The drill is below ground



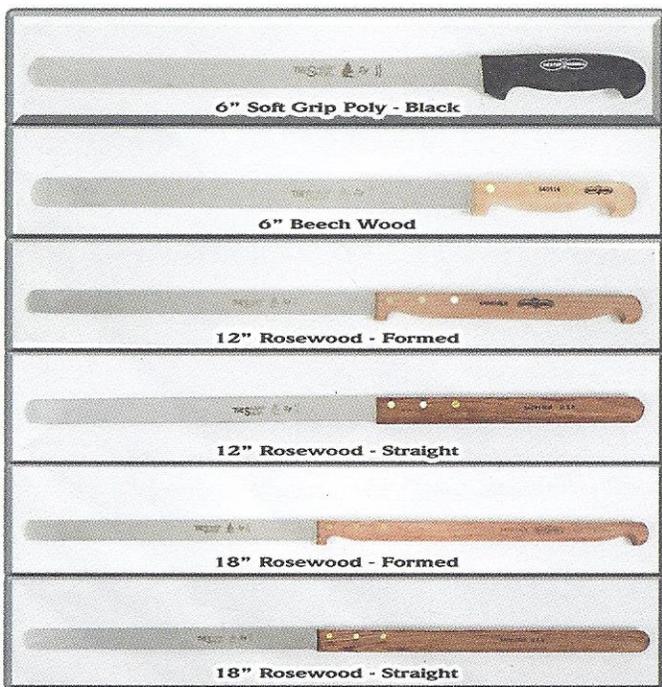
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PHOTOS FROM THE 2017 JOINT MEETING OF THE GEORGIA & SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATIONS



Demonstration of trimming a Virginia Pine



Craig Sorenson of Tim Mitchell's with Michael



Michael & Linda having fun on Wadsworth's farm



Vendors display Christmas supplies



T. Jay Rolland from Kolors by Kirk



Tom & Jodi Utsman and Michael Songer
Checking out a nice Carolina Sapphire

FLORIDA CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION
BALLOT FOR ELECTION OF OFFICERS
TERM COMMENCING JANUARY, 2018

Below are the nominations from the Board of Directors. If you wish to cast your vote for another FCTA member for any office, please write in the name (please ask their approval before voting for an alternate choice).

President

Jodi Utsman _____

Write in _____

Vice President

Mark Powell _____

Write in _____

Secretary

Sue Kossuth _____

Write in _____

Treasurer

John Gregory _____

Write in _____

Director for the term of 2018-2020

Mike Kelly _____

Write in _____

The current President, Michael Songer, will continue to serve on the BOD as Past President

To place your VOTE please email to Michael Songer, songerma@hotmail.com, or mail to: 443 Cody Dr, Orange Park, FL 32073

In addition, please provide your suggestions for people to be nominated for Director and Officer positions in the future.