

## WINTER MEETING OF INDIANA AND ILLINOIS CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS

Rex Korson—Christmas Tree Promotion Board

Vice Chair of the CTPB for Central USA. He is the representative for the Mid-West. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year for CTPB. He chaired the promotion committee. He wanted to focus on Millennials—especially—enjoying the experience of choosing a real tree, regardless of the venue [farm, retail lot, or “big box store”].

A major focus was of the “impressions” and engagements [like on social media likes, no-likes, images. Most of the focus was on digital media such as Facebook and Instagram, and Red Tricycle. Videos were pulled from existing “footage” that had never been viewed by the public. As the season went on more images were added to the promotion. There was considerable footage from Minnesota. These videos received over 250,000 views. There were over 45,000 Facebook followers. The measurable reach was over 273,000,000. CBS This Morning, Fox News, and other national and local carriers put the Real Tree message to the very large audience.

Real Tree promotion needs to be ongoing. The videos can be viewed by looking for “It’s Christmas Keep It Real” on Facebook.

The research side often gets lost in comparison to the promotion. Financial support for research in Oregon, Washington, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut—among other states—deals with coning, glyphosate resistance, and other growing issues.

CTPB works in concert with NCTA to make sure direct contact with the buying public is available and accurate.

Every commodity program pays in advance to the USDA to make sure the support continues. Ballots will go out for another referendum April 15. Voting will take place until May 10.

The Christmas tree industry is a commodity group. The 1996 establishment of commodity promotions to allow commodity promotion by Congress is why CTPB can exist.

Going to the CTPB site gives artwork, banners, and videos to share. The website is [itchristmaskeepitreal.org](http://itchristmaskeepitreal.org). This can be found through the main CTPB website.

Any grower with an interest can participate in CTPB.

Kyle Daniel—Purdue U.—Works with horticulture and landscaping

Larry Kuhns, PhD produced the images showing how chemical weed control can help produce a better product.

The economic cost to the trees of bark cracking is estimated at 6.6 million annually. Disease and insects were ruled out. In 2005 glyphosate was posited as the cause of bark cracking, especially on thin barked trees. Thin bark means there is very little if any tissue between the cork cambium and the growth cambial layer of cells. If there is green under the bark on the trunk of a tree, the tree has thin bark.

Glyphosate is the most commonly used herbicide in the world. It has limited soil activity, not volatile, broad spectrum, systemic, low environmental-impact, it’s easy to use, low mammalian toxicity.

Low soil activity in glyphosate is due to adsorption on soil where it is quickly broken down by soil microorganisms. It does change the microbial activity in the soil. It doesn’t break down quickly in the plant.

When glyphosate went out of patent different “enhancers” were added by other companies to make it work better. That isn’t always a good thing.

Glyphosate disrupts the plant metabolism—especially thru photosynthesis. The shikimic Acid pathway is disrupted. Lignin, tannins, phenolics, IAA [plant hormone] and other metabolites are disrupted.

Injury signs—bark cracking, witch's broom, chlorosis, dies down from the top [loss of apical dominance]. When we look for damage, we look for a pattern of damage. Non-living sources of damage leave patterns different for living sources of damage.

We've had glyphosate for a long time. The stuff is hydrophilic. Surfactants have been added to glyphosate to make it work better. Czarnota, M.A., 20008 Tolerance of 3 Juniper spp. to glyphosate. HortTech, Volume 18 issue 2 pp 239-242. The glyphosate that does not have the enhancers used sparingly is relatively safe. This is some potential for over top spraying, at least for juniper, of limited amounts sprayed at the right time of year. The safest spraying was done when the juniper was not in a period of active growth.

Shikimic acid—[[www.glyphosate.eu/glyphosate-mechanism-action](http://www.glyphosate.eu/glyphosate-mechanism-action)] Present/disrupted [??] when there is damage from glyphosate.

The glyphosate products increase bark cracks, reduce cold hardiness.

REN HALL—IDNR Division of Entomology & Plant Pathology—Pests relating to Trees for Troops

Nursery inspection—grower's license, dealer's license. Phytosanitary inspection & certification, apiary inspection, invasive insects and plants (Asian longhorn beetle, spotted lantern fly).

PHYTOSANITARY INSPECTION & CERTIFICATION

Out-of-state shipment needs certified inspection. All foreign countries insist on it.. Provide service to exporters. All countries vary, as do states.

There is a website for the phytosanitary data base. Plant products have their own requirements like cut trees do.

Drop-off, inspectors arrive, certificates are issued, and trees are packaged. All trees leaving a state for T4T are inspected. Must be free of any pest. Rejected trees are never sent. Scale insects, Zimmerman pine moth (larvae are in the pitch mass), resin midge larvae, spruce spider mites, entrance/exit holes on trunks, spittle bugs, spider egg cases, mantis egg cases, sawfly pupal cases.

Inspect your own trees. Clean up the tree, or do not cut it at all. [bugwood.org is a source of images]. Use a hand lens.

Each state has different standards. In some cases there are different standards for incoming items than for outgoing items. Any plant commodity should be inspected.

JANNA BECKERMAN—PERDUE U.—Top few pathology problems in pines, firs & spruces. Phytophthora root rot.

Rather than publish books—out-of-date even before publication, there are apps which can be updated frequently with text and images. There are also management options, usually for homeowners.

Conifers maintain a green habit for months after cutting—a desirable trait in Christmas trees.

Phytophthora root and crown rot. More than one species. A nursery to landscape problem, often happens often in heavy soils that are too wet. Improper plant choice is often a problem. This pathogen is "root nibbler" which doesn't "happen" all at once.

Symptoms: reduced root volume, colonizes the crown of plants, girdling the stem at/near the soil line. Symptoms vary with the host. The degree of root colonization by phytophthora varies by plant age, susceptibility and environmental stress. Will spread from one species to another—conifer to deciduous tree/shrub.

An oomycetes, not a true fungus. Swimming spores. [The oomycetes have their own pylium.] Activated by the exudates from germinating seeds or leakage through the root of the plant the spores will activate, form vesicles, and eventually zoospores which can invade plant tissues parasitizing and killing the plant.

Prevent with good, clean stock, sanitation, plant in well-drained soil if you can, avoid areas prone to standing water. Don't incorporate large amount of compost or mulch or fertilizer. Sources of



infection: plants, soil, water, standing water and muddy areas, debris/culls/weeds, dirty tools, dirty equipment.

Formulations impact control. There are different formulations. Subdue [methanoxin????] applied to planting medium for seeds as a granular. Follow with .1-2 fluid oz. for woody plants with 100 gal water and a 1 pint application. Spray to drench the roots and crown. Using this product [and others?] as a root dip could spread a pathogen from a single plant to all plants dipped after that.

There are many brands and formulas of treatments for phytophthora. Rotation is recommended to help avoid resistance or to find the fungicide for the species of phytophthora you're dealing with.

SATURDAY 26-1-2019

TOM DULL—NCTA REPORT AND UPDATE

Dull gave details on what NCTA does. The website itself supplies a great deal of information about NCTA. What's on the website isn't all of it.

Dull also gave a brief explanation of what NCTA can do compared to CTPB

[Much, if not all of Tom's report is available on the NCAT and CTPB websites.]

Real trees vs fake trees market share 1990-2016

About 1965 there were over 43 million trees in American households. Trees were in 90% of households with trees. Since that time—and now—fake trees have out-spent the real tree industry. The real tree industry has to do it smarter than the fake tree industry. We have to build a demand among Millennials more than in part because that is the generation with children who themselves can, in the future, choose to have a tree—a real one—in their homes at Christmas.

BRUCE KETTLER—Indiana Dept. of Ag—ISDA Resources for Christmas Tree Farms

He even wore a special necktie with the Christmas trees on it. He had participated in the T4T shipping day. Indiana enjoys an amazing rapport with ICTGA. Growers supply "the state house tree" and trees for state government offices.

Indiana Ag and Tourism both report directly to the Lt. Gov. along with Community and Rural Affairs, Defense Development, and other offices. The American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association will be in Noblesville.

Indiana Grown—promotes Indiana agricultural products—all of them. 1,350+ members help promote their products within the state. The program is free to members, because they are Indiana resident businesses. The program helps members diversify, collaborate, market.

The program has had tags printed that can be put on those IN-grown products. This group also works with Tourism and Development office. For Christmas tree grower a map of farm locations would put those grower before the public.

[Does the Illinois website need a somewhat more detailed map of where ICTA members are, but also of known, but non-member farms?]

Question: Can Indiana Grown help more Christmas tree farms come into existence? There is demand. There is also Small Farm Conference and Indiana Horticultural Congress. There was open discussion of how to increase the number of growers, both small and large. The other suggestion: go locally and talk to the FFA members about the alternate crop of Christmas Trees.

MIKE WICKER—Indiana farm bureau Insurance—Liability and Agritourism on Indiana farms

Yes, buying a Christmas tree is a family tradition. In choose-and-cut In house bill 1133 requires agritourism provider to post a sign that the tourists are responsible for their own actions.

Inherent Risks: land, vegetation, water behavior of wild or domestic animals, dangers of structures or equipment. This does not prevent being sued. The provider knows there is danger and

does not share his/her knowledge of the danger makes a landowner/business person “more?” liable. Employees must be made aware of safety necessities or procedures.

Your business needs to have liability insurance. Post warning signs. Develop safety procedures to reduce injury risk to employees and customers. Consider record keeping program. Keep the family dog away from the customers. **[Make sure there is a thing in ICTA website renew Illinois dog law. All farms need to know about this.]** Add warning signs about ALL dogs on leashes. WAGONS: supervise your customers; pull wagons on your own property only; stay off the public roads; avoid flatbed wagons; have barriers to the edge of the wagon; use steps; remember who your customers are and supervise the getting on and off.

NO chain saws, NO powered saws of any kind; no axes/hatchets. Provide bow saws. [Do you have “directions” on how to cut down a Christmas tree? Got a video? Or a good cartoon?

Petting zoos must be on premise only and in conjunction with other activities.

If you are selling food of any kind you may need a commercial policy that covers your food and your gift shop products. In some cases these policies can be purchased thru Farm Bureau. You may even need coverage if you have a food truck come in, unless it can indemnify you.

In IN if you are under \$100,000 you can add this to the farm policy. Over the amount you likely need commercial insurance.

In IN is there an agritourism “packet” from Farm Bureau. [Illinois probably does not either.... With the growth of this industry, further checking is a necessity. IL Farm Bureau members may need to go higher up in the hierarchy of the organization to find out what is necessary to help cover your farm’s needs.]

You even need to warn your customers about bad weather and call them in if there are impending conditions that are dangerous. This applies especially to thunderstorms in late autumn/early winter.

Product liability was not mentioned—no time.

#### JAMES FARMER—IN U.—IN Christmas Tree Consumer Survey 2018

More of the farms are in proximity to urban areas. Demand for locally grown trees has increased. Majority were not interested in new markets—responders to survey. Growers could not necessarily grow demanded species. There are also farm that will cease production in the next 5-10 years. A bottleneck is forming in terms of oncoming tree farms.

About 80% of surveyed households put up a tree. 27% did a real tree with about 10% from tree farms. There was a study of what household put up what kind of tree. 85% knew where to buy a real tree; 15% did not. About 2/3 believed an artificial tree and using it for many years is environmentally best. About 33% believed a real tree is better.

Is buying from a tree farm connected to other things—going to farmers markets, environmental supporters, and those who compost. As to motives for purchasing a real tree: freshness, beauty, support local business, availability of wanted species, farm experience, price, convenience, or just the ability to get it themselves.

Barriers to buying real involved cleanliness in the home safety convenience interest, price, transportation, proximity of a tree farm.

42% of real tree buyers went to farms, then to lots, then big box stores. 27% wanted to know more about root-on trees. Short needle trees were the most popular, then med length needles, long needle. A very few had not preference. Important to people: experience, baling, available staff. Most households that bought real trees had children in the house.

Indiana tree purchasing habits were also compared to national habits. Indiana cost per tree is less than the national average. One of the trends is a tree that is directly delivered. “Charlie Brown” trees are growing in popularity. [By the way, what is a Charlie Brown tree? We—the Gradys—have had



customers who called a perfectly shaped full, Grad AA, 6 ½ foot Norway spruce a “Charlie Brown”.]

Indiana is also doing a survey on the actual carbon footprint comparison between real trees and artificial trees.

Mike & Judy Reifenberg—St. Joe Christmas Tree Farm—A Year in the Life of St. Joe Christmas Tree Farm

Purchased the farm about 20 years ago. Originally it was Ed’s Tree Farm. 55 acres, 20 in trees. The farm has a map with numbered areas. Each area has numbered posts at each “corner” of each area. St Joe Christmas Tree Farm offers a memorable Christmas tree buying experience. Bring your family and friends to enjoy Christmas in the country. Conveniently located on the northeast side of Fort Wayne.

They have cut and burned their Douglas fir because of Swiss Needlecast. They have had better luck with other non-pine species. They also grow Scotch and white pine. They also sell premium pre-cuts. They also sell wreaths, garland and boughs. Centerpieces are made to order, and a gift shop.

Year: Jan/Feb—personal business, close out prior year, work on equipment. March: maple syrup, stump removal, plant, fertilizer 15-15-15, plant with dibble bar or auger. Apr/May: herbicide, band farm, cone the trees, continue insect and weed control, June/July: continue coning, summer meetings, mow. Aug/Sep: mow, trimming crew, insect and weed control, kill bagworms, hiring. Oct: start season, mow empty barn, gift shop, field clean up set up, set up cut tree areas, clean up woods of wreath and cut trees holding area, set up woods of wreath holding, tag trees, fall planting, Business season: bows, wreaths, they bring in 95% of the wreaths they sell, baling. They have a “tag-writing box”; they use lattice for display, wreaths, kissing balls, there is a Santa on the roof of the barn; hanging baskets, Trees for Troops contribution opportunity. November: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. open house, set up, set out cut trees, open Saturday before Thanksgiving for pre-cut only. Fully open Fri. after Thanksgiving; try to balance workers and workload (provide respect, encouragement, and minor perks); update website and Facebook daily. Dec: Sell, sell, sell; pay attention to shortages and over supply; start tearing down, clean, put away.

70% of sales are made on 7 days: the Friday after Thanksgiving plus that following weekend, of course; then the first weekend of December followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend. For every 100 trees : drilled 4, sold 42 preservative packs, 18 tree bags, 8 tree stands gave out 200 cups of complimentary hot cocoa and coffee(weekends only). They assess the cash drawers each night to compare to the starting “bank”.

ICTA CORPORATE MEETING JAN. 25, 2019, 6:10 p.m.

The meeting was opened by President Rob Richardson.

Grady read the Treasurer's report. Bill Holesinger moved to file for audit. Motion seconded and approved.

New manuals for new growers were handed out over the year.

Carol Richardson presented bills for web hosting and postage.

The Secretary's report was read. Holesinger moved to approve. Motions seconded by Carol Richardson. Approved

Carol Richardson reported on the status of our contribution for the scholarship money for forestry to Southern Illinois University. As of the meeting date no action had been taken.

Reports on members who have died or had illnesses.

A field day was discussed.

MACT this year will have a different format. Breakout sessions and vendors will be the first day. The field day will be the second day.

MACT includes IN, OH, MI, IL with KY, KA, IA, also. Membership includes a subscription to Christmas Trees Magazine.

Wendy Richardson is our NCTA state Director.

All members were encouraged to vote in favor of CTPB to maintain the promotion and research.

The national, thru Tom Dull, presented a resolution for IL to adopt favoring a "yes" vote in favor of the CTPB. Richardson called for a vote. The vote was unanimous to sign the resolution which will be posted on the ICTA website.

Letters from member Lou Little were read.

A program thru Sen Tammy Duckworth was announced.

Fields to Vase as a marketing method.

Winter Meeting in year 2020 will be with Indiana again.

Illinois Specialty Growers was discussed.

Rod Stahl was invited to take a seat on the board of directors. He was accepted by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Emily W. Grady, Recording Secretary