



Frank Zmigrodski, President
 Steve Higgins, Vice President
 Norma Corliss, Rec. Secretary
 Joanne Bond, Exec. Secretary
 Tammie Mulvey, Exec. Treasurer
 Dugald Kell Jr, Newsletter Editor

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Frank Zmigrodski

Now in my second year as President of the MCTA I find myself often reflecting on how fortunate I am to be surrounded by the group of dedicated and hard working men and women we have on the Executive staff and the Board of Directors. I thank every one of those individuals for making my brief tenure so pleasurable.

It is also a pleasure and a great compliment to the Maine Christmas Association to announce two of our members recently been elevated to prestigious positions on the national level.

Dugald Kell will serve as President-elect of the National Christmas Tree Association for 2018 and 2019 and serve two years as President starting in 2020, and then for two years as Past-President beginning in 2022. Congratulations are in order and we wish Dugald a successful tenure with the NCTA. I would also like to recognize him for his continuing work on the MCTA website. As the MCTA website “webmaster” Dugald has no doubt spent countless hours assisting members with website issues, updating the site and enhancing website appearance. Thank you for all you do, Dugald, and good luck.

Congratulations are also in order to Jim Corliss who was recently appointed to the Christmas Tree Promotion Board. Jim’s term on the CTPB began on January 1 of this year and runs through December 31, 2020. Some members may not know that Jim previously served as a Chairman of the NCTA Recycling Committee, President of the National Christmas Tree Association, President of the Maine Christmas Tree Association, and is currently a board member of the MCTA. Jim is also Chairman of the Fryeburg Fair Committee and coordinates Maine’s effort for the Trees for Troops Program. Thank you, Jim, for all you have done and good luck to you.

Frank Zmigrodski
 President

Looking Ahead to the 2018 Summer Meeting

This year’s summer meeting will be hosted by the Mingo family in Calais, Maine. The meeting is scheduled for September 15 and 16. Tentative plans are for Saturday’s meeting to be held at the Washington County Community College. On Sunday, in addition to a tour of the Mingo tree farm we also tour their wreath making facility and cranberry bog. Plan to attend.

2018 Officers & Directors Maine Christmas Tree Association

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SECRETARY'S CORNER

Joanne Bond

Things are going well for MCTA, with membership up and the website is making it easier for new members to join and members to pay by PayPal. Membership dues are almost all in for 2018, just waiting on a few to send theirs.

I am in hopes that as many as can will attend our fall meeting September 15 and 16 at Mingo's farm in Calais. It's going to be one of our best. The next newsletter will have all the particulars including lodging.

On another note, Jim Corliss went through knee surgery and as far as I know he is doing well. This required a last minute change to the April Director's meeting location. Gary and Melba Fisher were kind enough to host the meeting at their home in Belfast and it was wonderful.

Next month we will be getting together at the Corliss' to bag up 6,000 ornaments for "Ornaments for Troops". Even though May is the time of year for planting, we would appreciate all the help we can get. I will be sending out a blast as to time and when.

Thank you very much,

Joanne Bond
Executive Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

Tammie Mulvey

General Membership:

As of 04/20/18 we have 97 paid members along with two lifetime members. We have 53 members that have paid for our website which is an increase of 10 from 2017. We have 8 new members for 2018 as of April 21, 2018.

Bank Account:

Beginning balance 2018:	\$37,723.23
Income for 2018:	\$9,449.50
Expenses for 2018:	\$7,025.91
Transfer to Jim Rockus Scholarship fund:	\$400.00
That leaves us a balance of:	\$40,546.91

QUICK TREE FACT:

There are close to 15,000 farms growing Christmas Trees in the U.S., and over 100,000 people are employed full or part-time in the industry. It can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of typical height (6 - 7 feet) or as little as 4 years, but the average growing time is 7 years.

[source: NCTA website-> Education-> Quick Tree Facts]

THOUGHTS ON CHECKOFF AND THE REFERENDUM

Jim Corliss

First, I have to tell you I was appointed to the Promotion Board in early February and attended my first Board meeting in Portland, OR, two weeks later. So I admit to being highly biased in favor of a YES vote in the May referendum to keep the checkoff program going. A great deal of information was presented and I learned a lot at that meeting. But there was one item that leaped off the screen and startled me. More about that in a minute.

About two months ago a letter from a grower in Virginia was highly circulated throughout the industry. You may have received one. In it, he makes fun of the impact the campaigns of the last two years have had, saying, “impressions, whatever they are.” We should understand that as growers we would not sell a single tree, wholesale or retail, if we had not made a good impression on the buyer. Maybe it’s you personally, the quality of your product, your pricing, the way you do business, the way your farm looks, a combination of these and other impressions. However as an industry we have to acknowledge that we deal with several negative impressions which have built up over many years, promoted by other special interests. Real trees are unsafe, bad for the environment, messy, inconvenient, the list goes on and you know it well.

As growers, we accept that after putting a seed in the ground it takes more than ten years in most of the country to produce a saleable tree. The positive impressions we have made on the public the last two years are much like those seeds. The thing which startled me at the February meeting is how much impact we have already made in the first two years.

Responses were solicited after the season in a survey which covered four key areas. On the statement “Only real trees are 100% recyclable” 67% agreed. This was up from 64% two years ago. (these percentage increases seem small until set against the total population of the country). On the statement “Real trees are better for the environment”, 59% agreed, up 2% from two years ago. 56% agreed with the statement “Farmers plant 1-3 trees for every one cut. This, too, was up 2% from two years ago. Finally, 54% said they knew artificial trees ended up in landfills where they would stay for thousands of years. This was up 3% from two years ago.

The positive impressions we have made the last two seasons really have had a surprising effect! It may be too soon to tell if that has carried over into increased sales but if we keep telling our story it will happen. Like that seed we put in the ground our message needs to be nurtured with a consistent investment in time and money.

Please vote YES to keep that little tree growing.

Jim Corliss
Maine

“TWILIGHT” MEETINGS PLANNED FOR JUNE

Len Price

The MCTA Board of Directors has approved the planning of a couple of June “Twilight Meetings” in attempts for wider statewide outreach to members and potential new growers. The Massachusetts Christmas Tree Association has held these for many years, to favorable member response. We are invited to their first of 2018 on June 13, at White Gate Christmas Tree Farm in West Newbury, MA, for first hand experience. This meeting runs from 5:30pm until dusk. I would like to coordinate with other Maine growers to attend. Contact Len Price with questions or interest: 234-7268.

JANUARY 2018 DIRECTORS MEETING

Norma Corliss

The January meeting of the MCTA Board of Directors was called to order at 5:10pm, January 8, 2018, by President Frank Zmidgrodski. Officers and Directors attending were Frank Zmidgrodski, Steve Higgins, Tom and Joanne Bond, Jim and Norma Corliss, Rob and Tammie Mulvey, Brett Mitchell, Tom McNeil and Lee Skillins. Guests attending were Mary Zmidgrodski, Len Price and Regina Mitchell.

Joe Reynolds of Downeast Magazine spoke to the Directors about methods the magazine uses to increase circulation to see if MCTA could use any of these ideas to increase membership.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50pm for dinner and resumed at 6:20pm.

Executive Secretary Bond said she had not as yet been able to compile a membership list because members had failed to give her complete information. There was a long discussion of the role of the Executive Secretary as a go-between growers and buyers.

Treasurer Tammie reported the following account totals: General, \$16,522, Marketing \$213, Website \$208, Seed Orchard \$9,247, Meetings \$4,900 and Scholarship \$6,634. for a total net worth of \$37,723.

Jim Corliss commented that he planned to expand the wreath making demonstrations at Fryeburg Fair to the full eight days of the Fair. It was suggested that the score sheets for the tree and wreath exhibits be added to the website. Tom McNeil volunteered to see this was done.

Motion was made and seconded to drop membership in the Maine Tourism Association. Motion passed. Frank followed up on the presentation by Joe Reynolds by saying that the MCTA needs to find ways to interest prospective growers to join. Jim Corliss commented that we had just passed up a perfect PR opportunity to do that. The programs of all Associations meeting at the Ag. show were published in newspapers across the State. There was only a notice of our meeting but no program information was presented.

Len Price asked Board approval to raise the scholarships to \$1,000 for this year. Two scholarships have been approved. Motion passed.

Dugald Kell was unable to attend but submitted a written report on NCTA activities.

Lee Skillins reported on activities of the Ornamental/Horticultural Committee. No action was required.

Norma Corliss said 3,000 ornaments went out with the 300 Maine trees donated for Trees For Troops. There are already enough ornaments on hand for net year. Joanne announced she had raised enough money to purchase 600 ornament bags to cover the next two years.

Gary Fisher reported that Representative Pingree was interested in obtaining information regarding the difficulty of obtaining a reliable labor force.

There was a discussion of organizing short "twilight meetings" at locations around the state during the summer. No action taken.

The Mingo family will be hosting the MCTA annual meeting in September in Calais.

Jim and Norma Corliss offered to host the spring Directors meeting. Directors chose April 6th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Norma Corliss
Recording Secretary

SPRING 2018 DIRECTORS MEETING

Norma Corliss

The Spring Directors meeting of the MCTA was held at the home of Gary and Melba Fisher in Belfast, April 6, 2018. The meeting was called to order by President Frank at 6:32pm. Officers and Directors attending were Frank Zmigrodski, Tom and Joanne Bond, Rob Mulvey, Norma Corliss, Brett Mitchell, Doug and Dugald Kell, Tom McNeil and Lee Skillins. Guests were Regina Mitchell, Len Price, and Gary and Melba Fisher.

Norma explained that the reason Jim wasn't there was that he had had knee replacement surgery two weeks ago and was in a rehab facility.

Directors dispensed with reading the minutes of the January meeting. Joanne announced that Dave Rice is once again battling cancer. She announced that MCTA now has 117 members. Motion was made to make Doug Kell a lifetime member of MCTA. Motion passed. There is a developing problem with getting contact information from new members. Several solutions were discussed.

Treasurer Mulvey had prepared a report which was presented by Rob. General Fund \$18,487; Marketing \$201; Website \$1,158; Seed Orchard \$9,247; Meetings \$4,790; Scholarships \$6,034. Total net worth \$39,916. Treasurers reports was accepted.

Dugald said that NCTA is not planning a summer meeting this year and will probably partner with the Pennsylvania Association in 2019. It appears that NCTA membership is stabilizing at between 300 and 400 members. He reported on the Harris poll conducted by NCTA after the season.

Len Price said that although 2 scholarships were approved for \$1,000 each only one has been paid. The recipient of the other has not submitted the required paperwork.

A motion was made to dedicate \$2,000 to an ad in Downeast magazine. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Norma Corliss announced that Jim had been selected to the CTPB and attended a meeting of the Board held in conjunction with the Northwest Association in Portland, OR in February. Motion was made for the MCTA to support the activities of the CTPB. Motion passed.

Len Price spoke about the twilight meetings which Massachusetts holds in the summer. There was discussion whether it would be a good idea for Maine. Motion was made to make \$200 available to plan two twilight meetings for this coming summer. Motion passed.

Motion was made to donate \$100 to the Ag. in the Classroom project. Motion Passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm with thanks to Gary and Melba Fisher.

Norma Corliss
Recording Secretary

“LIMITED LIABILITY” AGRI-TOURISM SIGNS AVAILABLE

Len Price

“Limited Liability” agri-tourism activities signs are again available. Cost is \$15 each. Approximately 24” x 24” size, black print on weather proof white plastic sign stock. Currently are in Newburgh and can be picked up there or reserved for delivery to MCTA meeting site. Contact Len Price at 234-7268.

PESTICIDE NEWS

Frank Zmigrodski

Listed below is a schedule of pesticide training courses provided by the Maine Board of Pesticide Control:

May 1, 2018 to June 19, 2018

2018 Wild Blueberry Field Days – Knox/Lincoln Counties.

Dean Dolham, Route 235, 2740 Western Road, Warren. 6:00-7:00 pm Tuesdays; May 1, May 22, June 19.

Each meeting is approved for one credit

Suitable for Agricultural Plant, All Private and Agricultural Basic applicators

May 2, 2018 to June 20, 2018

2018 Wild Blueberry Field Days – Washington County.

Blueberry Hill Farm, 1643 Route 1, Jonesboro. 6:00-7:00 pm, Wednesdays; May 2, May 23, June 20

Each meeting is approved for one credit

Suitable for Agricultural Plant, All Private and Agricultural Basic applicators

May 3, 2018 to June 21, 2018

2018 Wild Blueberry Field Days – Hancock County.

G.M. Allen's Freezer, Route 15, Orland. 6:00-7:00 pm Thursdays; May 3, May 24, June 1, June 21

Each meeting is approved for one credit

Suitable for Agricultural Plant, All Private and Agricultural Basic applicators

Throughout the Year

Safety Works! Maine Department of Labor. Respirator and hazard communication classes approved for credits.

All other classes considered on a case-by-case basis.

Schedule on-line: http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=Safetyworks_Classes&v=ListAll

For more information, contact Maine DOL 207-623-7900 or toll-free 1-877-SAFE-345 (1-877-723-3345).

Suitable for All Applicators

Throughout the Year

Food Industry Sanitation Auditors Seminars.

Locations all over the US. Information and registration details at: <http://www.fisaconsulting.com/Seminars.aspx>

or contact Paul Laughlin at 913-782-6399 or info@fisaconsulting.com

Many credits

Suitable for Food Processing & Fumigation

Throughout the Year

U-Mass Green School, Conferences and Workshop Calendar at:

<http://extension.umass.edu/landscape/upcoming-events>

Suitable for Turf, Outdoor & Indoor Ornamental

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

On April 6, 2018 the MCTA convened a Board of Director's meeting hosted by Gary and Melba Fisher at their home in Belfast. Among the many topics discussed was the upcoming referendum on the CPTB checkoff program. All board members agreed that the issue is highly controversial and decided that the Maine Christmas Tree Association should take a position. After much discussion the Board of Director's voted overwhelmingly to support the continuation of the check off program.

(See article by CPTB member Jim Corliss elsewhere in this newsletter)

AGCOM REPORT

Gary Fisher

UPDATES AND EVENTS:

May 10th, 4pm – 6pm

MAINE FARMLAND TRUST hosts a **“HEALTHY SOILS, HEALTHY FARMS” Tour** and informative day at Stonyvale Farm, Exeter, ME. RSVP to Ellen@mainefarmlandtrust.org by May 9. See the Maine Farmland Trust site for information, mainefarmlandtrust.org

June 2nd, 9am – 1pm

O’DONALS Nursery tour the new **GEOTHERMAL GREENHOUSE**, an innovative way to heat a greenhouse. RSVP to sthompson@odonals.com by May 18th. 6 County Road, Gorham, ME. 207-839-4262.

June 22nd, 10am – 3pm

Public tour of new Diagnostic Lab in Orono. 17 Godfrey Drive, Orono. More info may follow. There has been a lot of work and effort put into this facility, it will be worth seeing it.

July 31st**LEGISLATIVE TOUR****OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION:**

- ◆ Check out Farm Bill updates on MCTA site, on the NEWS page.
- ◆ Check out goforager.com for how to source foods in Maine.
- ◆ GET REAL GET MAINE (www.getrealmaine.com) is a great site for info on Maine Ag and products, and it can also help Christmas Tree Growers get their news Out. Check it out.
- ◆ FOCUS MAINE (focusmaine.org) has a great site for Maine info.
- ◆ CHECK OUT THE MAINE CHRISTMAS TREE ASSOCIATION for INDUSTRY UPDATES ON A REGULAR BASIS, always something new.

SEED ORCHARD

Frank Zmigrodski

At the fall meeting Larry Downey reported that 7,000 transplants would be available for sale in the spring of 2018. Those that previously responded to surveys posted in the MCTA newsletter were given the opportunity to purchase these transplants. Larry Downey reports that the first planting in 2015 has resulted in 29,000 seedlings which are mostly 6-12 inches, with many in the 10-12 inch range. The seeds planted in 2016 suffered from poor germination resulting in 7,800 seedlings while the 2017 planting currently has 21,000 surviving seedlings. Larry’s goal is to raise 30,000 seedlings, or more annually, to satisfy the anticipated needs of MCTA members. This is a critically important project for the MCTA as our association receives \$.10 for every MCTA tree Downey Nursery sells. All members are encouraged to purchase future planting stock from Downey Nursery when available.

NCTA Director's Report

Dugald Kell Jr

Legislative Issues

You may recall that NCTA, through its affiliation with AmericanHort (formerly the American Nursery & Landscape Association), has the benefit of a lobbyist in Washington to monitor legislation and put forward the interests of Christmas tree growers. Our lobbyist, Craig Regelbrugge, issued his monthly report at the end of last month. Following is an edited version of that report:

Farm Bill Advances, But Path Uncertain

In April, the House version of the 2018 Farm Bill was introduced and approved by the House Agriculture Committee. NCTA and AmericanHort are primarily focused on several programs that are contained in the Horticulture Title. In that respect, the House proposal is really a “status quo” bill. The House bill highlights, at this stage:

Specialty Crop Research Initiative – Funding would be \$80 million per year, though \$25 million continues to be dedicated to solving threats to the citrus industry. We continue to seek funding of \$80 million for all specialty crops.

Plant Pest and Disease Mitigation and Disaster Prevention Program – Funding would continue at \$80 million per year. These programs provide ‘first dollars’ for responding to and mitigating invasive plant pest threats. One example – Dr. Gary Chastagner just received approval for a \$36,514 project to develop a treatment protocol for Megastigmus larvae in imported conifer seed shipments.

Specialty Crop Block Grants – These grants, mostly administered by the states, have funded numerous research, statistics, and marketing programs benefiting our industries. The legislative proposal would fund this program at \$85 million per year, \$5 million of which would go toward multi-state projects.

Do these programs really mean anything for Christmas tree producers? Dr. Chastagner, go-to researcher for our industry, puts it this way: “I often tell growers that my Christmas tree program would not exist without the support I receive from the Specialty Crop Block Grant program.” And Chastagner has received funding in recent years from all three programs mentioned above.

However, the Farm Bill may face a tough road ahead, because it does not have the bipartisan support that prior Farm Bills have typically enjoyed.

Future Meetings and National Tree Contests

The 2019 NCTA Board meeting and National Tree Contest will be hosted by the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association in conjunction with their summer meeting in August. A host farm has yet to be named. For the next biannual meeting, some discussion has been held with the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association about hosting the 2021 NCTA Board meeting and National Tree Contest. It would be held in conjunction with their summer meeting in that year. NCTA is also seeking to identify other states that may also have interest in hosting NCTA.



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