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 Bryan Mayo, Vice President
 Heidi Watson, Exec. Secretary/Treas.
 Dugald Kell Jr, Newsletter Editor

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A Publication of the Maine Christmas Tree Association

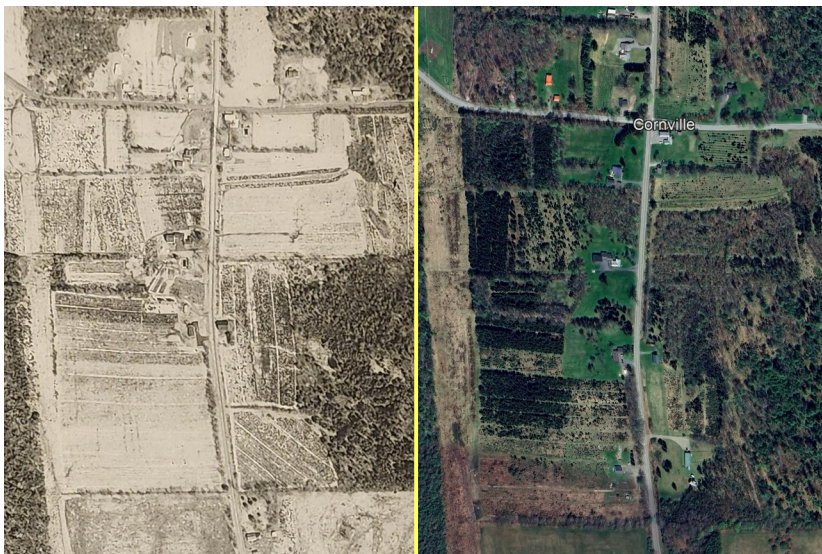
November 2024, Issue #279

Greetings from our President

Matt Quinn

Greetings MCTA members,

Autumn is an interesting time of year. Many people say it is their favorite, but I'm not sure how I feel about that. For me, fall brings almost overwhelming feelings of nostalgia. I never moved away from my hometown; the farm is about 1000 feet from my childhood home. Time has changed the landscape; fields once filled with Carleton Hodges' Christmas trees have grown up into a mishmash of birch and other pucker brush. Looking at old aerial photos and comparing them to Google Earth images of today is a trip. Carleton passed in '86, I was just six myself. His son, John and son-in-law, Bryant LaPlante worked the fields for a while. John moved on in the mid 90's, ending the Hodges'



Left: Hodges' Tree Farm circa 1986

Right: Quinn's Tree Farm on the same site 2025

Tree Farm era and I took over for Bryant shortly before his passing in '21 closing out The Forest and ushering in Quinn's Tree Farm. Looking back, it's easy to see how the world, and this industry has changed over the last 40 years. October seems to tug on my heartstrings and I find myself sitting down in the field to reminisce.

Invariably, when the moment of rumination is over, I realize that no matter how hard I try, no matter how badly I want to go back, that it isn't possible. Even with all the AI, screens, and "internets," humanity hasn't been able to invent a time machine. Every day is a new day and at the end of that day, the world is forever changed, be it little things like a tree trimmed and shaped or monumental events like meeting and marrying my wonderful wife, time marches on.

I find that the march of time is one of the most challenging things that any collaborative organization must face. I saw it at the volunteer fire department. The old guard wants things to be like they were when they were young, the young are full of vim and vigor ready to handle anything that comes their way, and me, middle aged, stuck between the two... The MCTA is no different, and our association must continue to evolve.

(continued on page 3)



2025 Officers & Directors Maine Christmas Tree Association

Officers

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207-576-5076 watsonoutdoors@gmail.com

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207-717-0836 matthewlacasce@yahoo.com

Calvin Luther

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207-825-8729 calvin1420@gmail.com

(3rd seat vacant)

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Lowell Freiman

263 Hopkins Rd, Washington, ME 04574

207-845-2544 lrfreiman@gmail.com

Tom McNeil

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(3rd seat vacant)

Directors until 12/31/27

Jim Hummer

20 Varney Mill Rd, Bath, ME 04530

207-443-5944 james.hummer@gmail.com

(2nd seat vacant)

(3rd seat vacant)

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331 Sanford Rd, Wells, ME 04090

207-251-2099 ryan.liberty1967@gmail.com

Director-at-Large

James Corliss

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Director-at-Large, Constitutional

Matt LaCasce (NCTA Director)

89 Ames Rd, Dover Foxcroft, ME 04426

207-717-0836 matthewlacasce@yahoo.com

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Heidi Watson

WOW!! We are already deep into preparing our farms for the harvest season! I don't know about you, but I am hopeful and excited!

Our current membership is 116, with a total of 14 new members this year!! We have a healthy bank account with \$61,000.00.

We are working on the Winter meeting, ensuring there are pesticide credits for you, and planning an all-around informative day. The registration form is in this newsletter, and you can also sign up online.

Membership dues are due in January and are \$85 Regular Membership and \$115 for a Sustaining Membership. If you would like the website listing, please add \$30.

In an effort to better organize our organization, I am requiring, with the support of the board of directors, that dues be collected in January. You can pay as early as November for the following year. We will no longer be waiting until the fall meeting. This is in accordance with our current bylaws.

I look forward to reaching this goal as a team! Thank you for your understanding and help!

Important Dates to Remember:

- November 30th - Trees for Troops Collection deadline, 53 Ghent Rd., Searsmont
- December 1st (tentative) - Governor's Mansion Holiday Decorating - People's Choice Winners to bring trees and wreaths to the Blaine House
- January 12th - Directors meeting at Burano's in Hallowell at 6 pm
- January 13th - MCTA Winter Meeting at the Augusta Civic Center/Agricultural Trade Show, Registration form in this newsletter
- January 31st - Membership Fee is due

Please call or text me with any questions - 207-576-5076

Respectfully,

Heidi Watson

Executive Secretary/Treasurer

Save the Date!

2026 Winter Meeting – Tuesday, January 13th in the
Howard Room at the Augusta Civic Center
Registration Form on Page 4

President Greeting (continued from page 1)

Over the last year, it's become clear to me that our website and other media need to catch up. For MCTA to stay relevant we need to ensure that our website serves our members well and they are getting the full value out of being part of this organization. For that reason, I have tasked VP Bryan Mayo to take the lead on revamping the website committee with a focus on ways to update our internet presence to 2026 standards. Please share your thoughts, or, if asked, to contribute more to this important project.

To go along with this, I am going to continue to advocate for branding updates. I want to work to ensure that the MCTA brand (logo, promotional materials, website, etc.) reflect our mission of promotion and education of Maine tree growers and Maine tree buyers. This is a hill that I'm willing to die on. It has to happen. We need to cater to our customer base, which isn't always appealing to our interests. Remember though that "the customer is always right in matters of taste" (attr. Harry Gordon Selfridge). Luckily, Cracker Barrel has shown us what not to do, so don't expect any face palming debacles. Again, this will require support and input from many people--be ready to share your thoughts and/or ideas. Change isn't easy, hell, it can be downright painful. But it is inevitable. Like our trees, we must bend with the wind, otherwise we will break.

I love the trees, and I love our Association. The people I have met, the friends that I have made, the lessons that they have taught me have all made me a better farmer and a better man. I am looking forward to continuing to do the good, albeit hard, work that allows all of us to be the best growers we can be. Enjoy your 2025 Holiday Season, make new memories, meet new people. Reminisce about days gone by and honor those friends who are no longer with us.

I'll see you at the Ag Show,

Matt

Vice President's Corner

Bryan Mayo

We had a very successful meeting At Fox Industries in Canada. Partnering with both Brian Fox and the Canada Atlantic growers made for a great time. We had around 80 attendants each day and gorgeous weather. High caliber speakers got into all the technical aspects of growing trees and orchards. Key notes speakers really set the tone as we are all worried about phytophthora root rot. Justin Whitehall, Richard Cowles, and Ron Smith were just a few of the respected speakers. After a great local catered lunch we explored the numerous fields and facilities of Mr.Fox's operation while our own expert Brett Johnson teamed up with Dr.Cowles to answer our endless questions. We even got to have a tractor ride over the interstate to visit the commercial composting facility a truly unique experience. Saturday was capped off with a social event that had many of us meeting new friends and having rich conversations. Who knew tree farmers were so good at cornhole! This is something I hope to make an annual event at meetings the future.

Looking ahead we have the winter meeting coming up at the Augusta civic center. We will be providing pesticide credits and some great speakers to be announced soon. If anyone has a subject they would like to see addressed please reach out and let me know. Keep your eye on the emails to see more announcements!

Finally I'd like to say joining this organization at this level has been a real honor. I've had a crash course in civics and am starting to get over the newbie excitement from saying "I second that". We have a strong group and a passionate volunteer board. The future shines bright on our trees. I hope everyone has a great season and I'll see you at the winter meeting!

Bryan Mayo

MCTA Winter Meeting
Augusta Civic Center
Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Farm Name/Business: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

List Additional names of ticket holders:

Registration type:	Quantity	Pre-Registration <i>due by Jan. 5th</i>	On - Site Registration	Extended Amount
☐ MCTA Member	_____	\$25.00	\$30.00	= _____
☐ Non-Member	_____	\$30.00	\$30.00	= _____
Sub-total =				_____

Pre-register for the Commissioners luncheon:

Contact Heidi Watson (207-576-5076) for the final price on tickets, estimated to be \$25

Lunch _____ @ \$ _____ = _____

Payment Details

Make Check payable to MCTA

Ck.# _____

Mail Form and Payment to:

Heidi Watson
918 Richville Rd.,
Standish, ME 04084

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - October 8th, 2025

Jenn Hicks

Call to order

Board Members in Attendance: Matt Quinn, Heidi Watson, Bryan Mayo, Matt LaCasce, Calvin Luther, Ariana Pildis, Ryan Liberty, Jeff Patterson, Jim Hummer, Dugald Kell, Gary Fisher

Others in attendance: Jenn Hicks, Administrative Contractor

Approval of minutes from April board meeting

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee (Matt Quinn) - There are two vacancies on the board. Matt LaCasce's and Calvin Luther's terms expire in January. Calvin will finish his first term. Matt will be finishing his first term but will not renew. There are two members who may be interested in being on the board: David Karas, Karen Bragdon. If they are interested they will be nominated during the January meeting. Arriana Pildis is filling a vacancy. A term is two years.

Secretary's Report (Heidi Watson) - 116 paid members, removed 22 members, 14 new members. MCTA paid the NCTA annual fee.

Treasurer's Report (Heidi Watson)

Administrative Assistant's Report (Jenn Hicks) - Provided administrative support for the Executive Committee during meetings and in between including note taking, advisement, and follow up with membership communication using the bulk email platform, MailChimp and Facebook. Served as the administrative support for the Fall meeting planning including attending planning committee meetings, helping develop the agenda, and conducting follow up with committee members. Attended the Fall meeting to help with logistics

Website Committee (Dugald Kell) - Gary Fisher and Tom McNeil are also members of this committee. This committee was in charge of finding a website developer who created the current site. Dugald is in charge of technical issues...there were problems with the sign up system on the website this spring, requiring an update of a plug-in. There have been 96 registrations since the spring, 28 of them activated their profiles. The issue might be because of bogus registrations. Dugald oversaw the set up of event forms on the website to use for event registration. The forms were used it for the Fall meeting.

Marketing Committee (Ryan Liberty) - Winners of the Peoples Choice at Fryeburg Fair will be presenting at Blaine House, and will confirm the date by week of October 13. Brand update - will revisit in 2026. Will work with Matt Quinn to interview a long time MCTA member later in 2025. Department of Corrections/Trees for Troops tree farm continue to plant and maintain trees for Trees for Troops. Summer time farm visit event at Ryan's farm, Crooked Brook Farm was very interesting and well-received.

Heidi asked if the board supported the Trees for Troops sponsorship request for MCTA to buy trees from growers and donate them.

Motion: Set aside up to \$2000 to satisfy MCTA's agreement of 300 tree donation with Trees to Troops. Made by Bryan Mayo seconded by Jim Hummer. Motion passed.

Gary Fisher suggested that MCTA should have t-shirts and hats to sell at events. Those in attendance agreed. Next steps: Ariana and Heidi will research and determine what is possible.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - October 8th, 2025 (continued)

Meetings Committee (Brian Mayo) - Fall meeting was a success, food was more expensive, but high quality. Good speakers, same size group as past years. The Saturday night social at the hotel worked out well and served as a good opportunity to connect. Received good feedback. Next year's Fall meeting will be at Boiling Springs Tree Farm in Dayton. Winter meeting will need to focus on pesticide credits.

Fryeburg Fair Update (Gary Fisher) - Next year's dates are Oct 3-11. The fair wasn't very lucrative, slower, less people possibly b/c of weather. Was able to sell 150 of last year's seedlings, ended up with 150 of this year's stock. Made \$3,843 from sales.

Trees For Troops (Tammy Mulvey) - 250 trees have been donated to Trees to Troops. 50 more are needed.

Seed Orchard Committee (Calvin Luther) - Norwidgewock orchid: Planted 29 trees this year--lost one. Fertilized and mowed this fall. Transplanted 100 trees that Calvin bought. Grafting Len's improved trees. The grafted trees are doing well. Sheared up improved stock but plenty on top to use for grafting. Have 3 years worth of seed. MCTA Trees: Downey had trees left over--fewer MCTA members bought this year. Sold the rest to other buyers. MCTA still got some of the proceeds. No visits to the Ashland orchard.

Old Business - None

New Business -

- National Christmas Tree Association Board membership--Matt LaCasce will be resigning from the National Christmas Tree Association Board.

Motion: Naming Ryan Liberty to the National Christmas Tree Association Board and cover travel costs to attend a meeting. Bryan Mayo, Seconded by Jim Hummer. The motion is passed unanimously.

- MCTA Website Function--Matt Quinn expressed concern about issues with the functioning of the website and discussed how to make improvements so the website works well for members. Bryan Mayo proposes a group of interested members meet to discuss this further with current website administrator, Dugald Kell.
- MCTA Dues Structure--Discussion about changing the dues structure from recurring membership in January to rolling renewal.
- Change the fee structure--

Motion to Adjourn: Made by Matt Quinn. Seconded by Bryan Mayo. Passed unanimously.

Fall Meeting Report

Jenn Hicks

On September 12 and 13, Maine Christmas Tree Association held its annual Fall Meeting at Brian Fox's Christmas tree farm in Richmond Corner, New Brunswick, Canada. This event was a combined meeting with Christmas Trees Atlantic in a unique opportunity to gather with fellow Christmas tree growers north of the border. Just over 100 people attended each day.

During the two day program, attendees had the opportunity to hear from expert presenters including Dr. Richard Cowles from the Valley Laboratory of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Dr. Justin Whitehill from the Department of



Fall Meeting Report (continued)

Forestry and Environmental Resources at North Carolina State University, Mike Cunningham from Rose Enterprises, Canadian forester and researcher Ron Smith, and Brett Johnson from University of Maine Cooperative Extension. The meeting host, Brian Fox, owner of Fox Brand, Inc., led a tour of his tree farm operation in the afternoon of both days.

Dr. Whitehill gave two presentations on the use of genetic modification to support disease and stress resistance, as well as climate resilience. Dr. Cowles provided an update on his research on needle retention and spoke about pest issues during the field tour. A panel made up of Matthew Wright from Christmas Tree Atlantic, Len Price and Calvin Luther from MCTA, Larry Downey from Downey Trees, and Ron Smith focused on tree seed orchards and grafting. Ron Smith presented additional research about seed orchards on the second day of the meeting. Brett Johnson discussed the use of herbicides and pesticides.

The Fall Meeting served as an opportunity for tree farmers, both new to the industry and veterans, to connect and learn from each other and from the impressive Fox Brand, Inc operation, which among many things, sells 20,000 Christmas trees a year.

Thank you to CTA's Brian Fox and Matthew Wright, who were invaluable to the planning and execution of this event. Key organizers also included MCTA Treasurer/Secretary Heidi Watson, VP Bryan Mayo, with assistance from President Matt Quinn.



AGCOMGary Fisher

Hi MCTA members,

I first want to thank Ryan Liberty for sitting in for me last month while we were setting up at Fryeburg for the Fair.

The October AgCom meeting was centered mostly around the impacts of farms and related commodities that the government shutdown is affecting. Some farms that have pending claims that go back 2 years have been put on hold until things get rolling again.

The new claims that have been started this year due to the crop losses from the drought will take some extended time to get finalized. The only thing that may help at all is for growers to call their legislators and/or contacts to express the need that the government get back in operation for everyone's best interest. This may seem fruitless but remember the squeaky wheel concept, the noisy wheel gets the grease.

The Ag Show is in January and it is important to show support for the equipment and farm-related folks, you appreciated them being there for farms. There are meetings for farming and farmers, give them a look so you can plan. The shutdown has not spared anyone so remember we are all in this together.

The next AgCom meeting is November 25th and I would really like to take back some thoughts from our members, then present them to the council to work on next year.

Gary Fisher (MCTA AGCOM REP)

Social Media Shout Outs!

Any MCTA member who would like MCTA to promote their business on the MCTA Facebook account during the Christmas season should contact Jenn Hicks, MCTA administrative contractor at jhicks72@gmail.com to discuss further. And don't forget to follow the MCTA Facebook page - go to: www.facebook.com/mainexmastree

Fryeburg FairGary & Melba Fisher

Began setting up Sept. 24th, the day was comfortable giving hopes of a great run of the fair for this year. Evening of 24th nice and enjoyable again with visions of an excellent fair ahead of us. Thursday the 25th, the trees and wreaths began showing up for the exhibit. The 26th brought another nice day, bringing more trees and wreaths. By the end of the day, we had 25 trees and 28 wreaths on display, ready to go! The evening of the 26th, brought a very heavy rain storm putting a damper on the upcoming events, in our minds. The morning of the 27th hardly showed the amount of rain we had and the fair kicked off pretty much as usual.

Saturday the 27th had its busy times but was much slower than fair openings of the past. The morning of the 28th was interrupted with the new, judging demands, of being done during the fair. It was necessary to shut the exhibit down to the public for 3 hours as judging and tabulations were completed. The "People's Choice" voting had to be done in two different days, Sat. & Sun. afternoon, so it didn't linger into the coming week. A big thanks to Ryan Liberty for encouraging people to vote for people's choice. Plugs left from 2024 which I had kept in a planting bed for the past year did well, about 140 sold for \$250.00. These were Fraser's and Blue Spruce and had grown to about 12" & 15" respectively. This years plugs sold for \$4 each or 2 for \$7.50 with

Fryeburg Fair (continued)

ease, but not in great amounts as in years past. I had ordered 1000 plugs this year, 500 each of Balsam & Blue Spruce and sold about 800. The balance of, 200 +/-, are tucked away in

their beds for the winter. Visitation hours are by appointment w 4^ 4^- A huge thank you to all of our judges, demo folks and helpers.

The wreath demos were very well attended and retail sales were good after the demos, but sluggish the other times of the fair. People seemed to be very frugal in their spending. Plug sales were ok but not great as said. Interest in Christmas trees in general were very high and hopefully produce some new members. Speaking of new members a few stopped by to say hi and see the operation. We had members that had never worked the booth/exhibit, worked this year and have requested to work again next year, gotta love tree farmers!!

The weather, quite hot, was the biggest downside to the 9 days of the fair. The word on the street is the Fair will be done much the same next year, I will keep you updated as I find out. Our gross sales for this year \$3,842 -- not great, but not bad.

Gary Fisher exhibit "Superintendent"!



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Seed Orchard Committee

Calvin Luther

Norridgewock Orchard: Todd Murphy reported that the older trees in the orchard were experiencing more mortality, and there was not a commercial crop of cones available this year. The newer trees (15 yrs old?) are doing well, and will be producing the next crop of seeds.

Ashland Orchard: This seed orchard was not visited this year. There continues to be concern about the spruce budworm infestation in northern Maine, but the bugs were further north and west of Ashland this year.

Huff Hill Orchard: 29 grafted transplants were outplanted this May, and 28 are still alive at the last report. They have been fertilized recently, watered last month, and mowing of the field has occurred.

An additional 31 transplants grafted in May are doing well under Len Price's care. These will be outplanted in May 2026. And we will have potted MCTA root stock (100 3-2 seedlings potted in May this year) available to accept grafts next year as well, to continue to produce additional seed tree stock.

Regards,

Calvin Luther, Co-Chair

Marketing Committee

Ryan Liberty

The Marketing Committee has been busy with many different initiatives over the last few months. Here are a few examples:

We worked with Fryeburg Fair superintendents Gary & Melba Fisher during the fair on best ways to promote our brand and industry. We'll be huddling up post fair to discuss things that are working well in the exhibit, as well as things that may need to be tweaked or added.

The Blaine House has committed to Dec 1st as the tentative date for the presentation of the Blaine House Christmas trees and wreaths. We'll be organizing that day's events and will keep all parties updated along the way.

We'll continue to survey membership on their thoughts regarding our current image, and whether we should consider a brand refresh.

We hope to begin a 'Featured Farmer' piece for our next newsletter – The goal is to highlight a new farmer in each newsletter.

Matt Quinn is making the final edits to our next 'Legacy Member' video so that it can be viewed at the upcoming winter meeting in Jan. That video will be celebrating Jim Corlis' contributions to our organization and industry.

I continue to sort through the MCTA archival material that Joanne gave me so that it can be organized and digitized for future generations. I encourage membership to share anything that they have that helps to tell the story of our organization.

We continue to work with the Maine Department of Corrections on the 1,000 seedlings that they've planted for a future donation to Trees For Troops. We ordered 500 more seedlings for them for spring 2026. We expect they'll have trees ready for donations in four years.

I will be encouraging more MCTA members to participate in future Maine Open Farm Weekend events. It's a great way to highlight your farm and to enhance the value of your trees by showing all of the work that goes into growing trees year-round.

I continue to represent the MCTA as a liaison to the Northeastern Christmas Tree Research Alliance. This organization's mission is to ensure the prosperity of our industry through the research and study of the trees that we grow.

MCTA Scholarships Available

MCTA scholarship money is available for the (new as of 2025) March 1, 2026 deadline. Students at all school types can qualify.



Maine Christmas Tree Association, Inc. Annual Membership Application/Renewal Form

Owner's Name _____		Date _____
Farm Name _____		
Mailing Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____
Farm Address (if different) _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____
Phone1 _____	Email _____	
Phone2 _____	Website _____	
Check here to receive the MCTA newsletter by email only: ☐		

Please check the items that describe your operation:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ☐ Wholesale Grower | ☐ Choose & Cut Grower | ☐ Wreath Maker |
| ☐ Retail Grower | ☐ Tree Retailer | ☐ Related Products |

Membership Fees: <i>Sustaining members help keep MCTA strong</i> Junior membership for under age 18 – enter birth month/year: ____/____)	Circle <u>one</u> fee below: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Regular</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$85</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sustaining</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$115</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Junior</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$0</td> </tr> </table>	Regular	\$85	Sustaining	\$115	Junior	\$0
Regular	\$85						
Sustaining	\$115						
Junior	\$0						

MCTA Website Fees: To be listed on the website, you must be a member of the MCTA and grow/produce Christmas evergreen products in Maine. After paying the appropriate fee, a website account will be created for you. You will be sent the information to log on. You will be able to customize the info on your farm's web page on the MCTA website, including the products you offer, hours, location, etc., and customizable links to your own website and/or Facebook pages.	Circle <u>ALL</u> fees that apply: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Annual Fee</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>New Listing</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$30</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: right;">(additional to the annual fee)</td> </tr> </table>	Annual Fee	\$30	New Listing	\$30	(additional to the annual fee)	
Annual Fee	\$30						
New Listing	\$30						
(additional to the annual fee)							

Send completed application with a check to the treasurer at the following address: Heidi Watson 918 Richville Rd Standish, ME 04084	Payment Due: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Check# _____</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Amount \$ _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Payable to: MCTA</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Add the circled Amounts above</td> </tr> </table>	Check# _____	Amount \$ _____	Payable to: MCTA	Add the circled Amounts above
Check# _____	Amount \$ _____				
Payable to: MCTA	Add the circled Amounts above				
Membership Application can be done online at mainechristmastree.com. Payment can be made by PayPal or credit card.					

Signature _____ Date _____



If undeliverable, return to:

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