

Southern Christmas Trees

The Southern Christmas Tree Association Newsletter Forth Quarter 2015

December 15, 2015



Important:

SCTA board meeting: 10:00 am January 30, 2016, Lazy Acres Plantation, Chunky, Mississippi.

SCTA 2016 annual (board, conference & business) meetings: August 12 – 14, Mississippi Gulf Coast.

2016 membership solicitations will be e-mailed and USPS mailed first quarter 2016. Upon receipt, please pay promptly.

Closing Comments by 2014/15 President Robert Foster

Dear Friends,

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve the past two years as President of the Southern Christmas tree Association. I appreciate the hard work our Executive Secretary - Michael Bucharth and board members put in for this association. My wife, Heather, and I have learned so much from all of you over the years. I hope that I was able to contribute as well. I will continue to be involved and available to help in any way that I can.

To all the new members, please do not hesitate to call on other farmers and ask for their advice. We are happy to share with you what we know so you do not have to repeat our mistakes.

To the experienced members, continue evolving your business. There is always room for improvement. We owe it not only to ourselves but to our customers to try and give them the best experience we can. Do not forget that we are selling our customers an experience filled with memories - not just a tree.

I look forward to the new ideas and leadership from our incoming president Ray Gilbert, co-owner with his wife, Joan, of Gilbert Christmas Tree Farm near Lanett, Alabama. Ray brings a wealth of experience to the association. We are thankful for his interests serving SCTA once again as president having served the position in 2008.

I will continue to advocate for small business and farmers while I take on my new role in the Mississippi House of Representatives as the District 28 State Representative.

May the Lord bless you, your families, your hard work and your farms.

Sincerely and Merry Christmas,

Robert Foster, SCTA President 2014/15

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Dr. Ken Tilt Recognized



Dr. Ken Tilt, SCTA's former Alabama Extension Director from Auburn University Department of Horticulture, now retired, was recently recognized by SCTA for his many years of support, cooperation and involvement with the association and Christmas tree growers throughout the South. Senior Vice-President Ray Gilbert entertained Ken for lunch November 4, 2015 in Valley, Alabama when he presented Ken a plaque from SCTA's membership.

Ray said "Ken was very touched and will try to attend a meeting".

Below is the November 23, 2015 e-mail Ken sent to the membership via the executive secretary.

Merry Christmas Everyone,

I met with Ray Gilbert a couple of weeks ago in Valley, Alabama at Chuck's Barbeque and received a very thoughtful, greatly appreciated special recognition plaque for my service to the Southern Christmas Tree Association. Thank you so much! It was appropriate that we met at Chuck's because over my 30-ish years and multiple boards and presidents, I was accused and sheepishly denied with a smile the charge that I always managed to arrive just in time for lunch or dinner. Guilty / busted! However, it was your fault for being such good cooks and offering such warm hospitality.

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At the University of Tennessee and Auburn, my main extension job was serving the nursery industry but at both places I was asked to do what I could for Christmas tree growers because the extension forestry Christmas tree faculty retired in both places and were not going to be replaced. Growers in Tennessee and Alabama had to have great patience because my initial knowledge base was very low when going to farms where growers had grown trees for 2 or 3 generations. So, I interned and apprenticed under the masters, studied what little research was available and offered my knowledge to new growers and we both learned together. I was always especially amazed, certainly now that I am retired, how many people retired into growing Christmas trees. It is the ultimate in positive attitude that a 50 to 60-ish year old would start a Christmas tree farm when firs and spruces were planted into seed beds for 2 years and then to transplant beds for 2 to 3 years before going to the field for 6 years or more. Virginia pines and Leylands are better but still require great optimism. It shows the love that people had for being outside and combining that with their love of people and heavy endowment with the Christmas spirit. So, my part time job with Christmas trees became the dessert of my career enjoying you enjoying your passion. My first year in Lee County, Alabama was the biggest year in grower numbers and it declined continuously until I retired. My first meeting in Alabama had 30 members of the Lee County division of the Alabama Christmas Tree Association attending a dinner meeting and discussing how to increase membership and deal with the "fake trees". Some things never change!

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I have so many wonderful memories and made so many friends over the years. The Christmas tree people were a small part of my job but became such a big part of my life and more of a passionate hobby. I looked forward to the opportunities to visit friends, especially the ones that loved to cook or could whip up a fresh picked tomato sandwich! I screwed up way too often (I am sure I just got a bunch of AMENS!) but that is why they call them extension "TRIALS". I appreciate your sense of humor, patience and the innate goodness of "Christmas People" for your forgiveness and short memories. I do have many special memories and funny stories to tide me over when I get past my 8 grandkids (all under 4), golf, gardening, movies, home repair, etc. and begin to spend more time sitting in the yard with my wine or cold beer and reflecting on my blessings. This is probably already taking up too much space in the newsletter but I wanted you to know how much I appreciate your thinking of me and overlooking my faults and appreciating my good intentions. In Southern English, "Bless his heart, he tried". One of these days you may hear a car coming up the road and say, "My Lord, here comes Ken Tilt. Put out another plate at the table and don't let him spray any of our good trees!"

Merry Christmas and Best Wishes to you all!

Thank you!

Ken Tilt, Retired (not into growing Christmas trees)

Following the presentation, Kent sent pictures to his family and has since received texts from everywhere saying 'Great job Pops!'. He added, "You gotta love it."

We do love it Ken. Thank you so much for your support and friendship!

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Christmas Tree Promotion Board News

SCTA's National Director Bentley Curry provided this Christmas Tree Promotion Board - Promotion Committee program update from Tim O'Connor, Executive Director.

- A request for proposals (RFP) was sent to 25 agencies for which the CTPB has received a number of responses.
- Hired a small social media agency to implement the 2015 campaign.
- A focus group identified that CTPB's greatest opportunity is to connect families with the wonderful experience and memories of selecting their Christmas tree together each holiday season. Five families have been identified who have realized they were missing this great family tradition and are making the switch to a real tree this Christmas. They have agreed to be featured in our social media and public relations campaigns. The first installment of their stories will go out in November detailing their decision to switch to a real tree, why they made that choice and their plans for adding that experience to their family. The second part of their stories will be photo shoots of their families selecting their trees and describing that

experience. The final part will be following one family to their home as they decorate their real tree. The Promotion Committee believes these will be powerful, personal, real stories that will connect with consumers, play well on social media and should garner strong media interest.

In addition, Dr. Stephen Dicke forward to the association a Christmas Tree Promotion Board letter of introduction sent to Mississippi Extension. The letter contains pertinent information that you may want to keep on file.

Remember, SCTA is fortunate to have a direct contact with the board through SCTA member / officer Bentley while he sits on the board as the eastern tree producing representative. Thanks Bentley for your interest and enthusiasm serving our needs nationally!

The Christmas Tree Promotion Board can be contacted at 7817 South Forest Street, Centennial, Colorado 80122; e-mail: Tim@ChristmasTreePromotionBoard.org or viewed on-line at www.ChristmasTreePromotionBoard.org.

Featured *Christmas Tree Information* article *Diseases of Leyland Cypress* by Clarissa Balbalian, Plant Pathology Diagnostic Laboratory Manager, Mississippi State University Extension Service

The previously known *Christmas Tree Handbook - 2007*, as compiled by Dr. Stephen Dicke of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, is now offered on-line as *Christmas Tree Information* in a convenient web based drop box. Topics concerning Southern growers such as suppliers, farm layout, Cercospora Needle Blight, fertility, diseases, insects, farm budget, fungicides, propagation, soil testing, tree species, weed control and the *USDA Pest Control Manual* make it a go to source of information. Using the drop box platform allows Dr. Dicke to readily update or include new documentation.

This particular article is featured as a newsletter attachment. The entire on-line articles can be viewed at the address listed below. Copy it carefully for it is lengthy and confusing. There are upper case "I"s, the letter "O" and number "0" that can be easily misinterpreted. The board appreciates Dr. Dicke's support and initiative to make this valuable information available.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t4hu4dciz6k6zez/AABVAvTuSV5agEO2IUeQcz7Ya?dl=0>

Potential Leighton Green Disease Resistance Study

Mid-November, Clarke Gernon of Shady Pond Tree Farm near Pearl River, Louisiana was contacted by John Frampton, a professor in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources at North Carolina State University, who specializes in Christmas tree genetics and breeding. Professor Frampton had received a digital copy of Shady Pond News when his interest was piqued about the disease resistant Leighton Green sport that was mentioned in the newsletter. Botanically, a "sport" is a genetic mutation that usually results in a bud.

Professor Frampton is considering conducting research on Passalora needle blight, formerly Cercosporidium or Cercospora, by artificially inoculating 30-40 Leighton Green cuttings and 30-40 cuttings of Gernon's sport with Passalora under local environmental conditions. Professor Frampton and Clarke are encouraged that if the proposed research verifies that the sport has a useful level of resistance, then the next step would be to determine how to make it more widely available to Christmas tree growers across the South.

Following the Christmas season, arrangements will be discussed to begin a research effort that could lead to disease resistant planting stock.

SAJE New Ownership Announcement Letter (December 7, 2015)

Dear Southern Christmas Tree Association members.

I hope this letter finds everyone well and that everyone is having (or had) a wonderful and successful selling season.

I am excited to announce that Steele's Christmas Tree Farm has purchased the SAJE Christmas tree shearing machine company from our good friend Wesley Bass. My son Kevin, Jr. and I are constructing a new shop on our farm to manufacture and service the SAJE Shearing Machine. We hope to continue to provide you with the wonderful service we all have become accustomed to with Wesley in the past. There will be a learning curve associated with the transition and I hope everyone understands. We will strive to process all orders and repairs as quickly as possible.

My son and I look forward to helping you in the future with your shearing needs. Thank you.

Sincerely Yours,
Kevin Steele, Sr.

Farm Closings

Kenneth Branton of Branton Tree Farm near Bogalosa, Louisiana in Washington Parish will be closing his farm in 2016 as he reduces his current inventory.

Jerry Estes of Tranquility Hills near Ashland, Mississippi in Benton County will also close his farm this year. Jerry has had a particularly severe deer problem destroying his trees.

SCTA will miss the Brantons and Estes both whom joined a couple years ago. SCTA wishes them good luck with future farming endeavors.

Trail of Presidents

The executive secretary is building a historical record of various documents and, as shown below, a listing or "trail" of presidents who have served this association and its predecessors. Unfortunately, records are lacking for the Alabama Christmas Tree Growers' Association. Any contribution or correction you can offer will be appreciated.

Southern Christmas Tree Association	
2014-2015	Robert Foster
2012-2013	Joe Gersch
2011	Steve Mannhard
2010	Larry Massey
2009	Clarke Gernon
2008	Ray Gilbert
2007	Tommy McDaniel
2006	Bentley Curry

Louisiana-Mississippi Christmas Tree Association

2005 Paul Beavers
2004-2002 Regginald Pulliam
2001-2000 David Gaude
1998-1999 Al Acosta
1996-1997 Ed Rawls
1994-1995 Shawn Strobel
1992-1993 T.M. Luster
1990-1991 Clarke Gernon
1988-1989 Rayburn May
1986-1987 Barton L. Bennett

Louisiana-Mississippi Christmas Tree Growers Association

1984-1985 James J. King
1982-1983 Wallace P. Swedenburg
1980-1981 Robert N. Eddy, Jr.
1978-1979 Edward L. Blake
1976-1977 Fritz Lindley

Alabama Christmas Tree Growers' Association

1999 Ben Graves (ACTA)
1995-1999 *Help! Anybody know who served these years? Please inform the executive secretary.*
1994 Steve Mannhard
1992-1993 *Help! Anybody know who served these years? Please inform the executive secretary.*
1991 Debbie Sullivan
1982-1990 *Help! Anybody know who served these years? Please inform the executive secretary.*
1981 Bill Murray
1978-1981 George Brown

SCTA Website

Advertisers, please note that links to your company websites have been added to SCTA's Home and Locate-a-Farm pages as well as your names listed (again) at the end of the newsletter. Your advertising clips are posted on the membership page.

In an effort to thwart bothersome e-mail miners, most individual e-mail addresses, except for advertisers, are being removed from the website.

SCTA's website is constantly reviewed and updated. If you have recently obtained your own website or made any changes to your contact information, please inform the executive secretary immediately by e-mail so the updates can be made on the association's website.

New growers who are not yet ready to sell trees should consider making web announcements at least one year in advance on SCTA's website to stimulate interest and feel the market. SCTA will post your page with the expected sale season the year before (or earlier) you open.

Association Membership / Dues

The executive secretary began accepting 2016 dues beginning January 2016. A \$10.00 late fee has been assessed renewals after March 31, 2016. *If you have not paid up, please do so or at least inform the executive secretary you care not to remain a member.*

The SCTA has three (3) levels of membership:

- 1) Regular grower dues are \$120.00 annually.
- 2) New growers, just starting out, may join for \$50 annually and can pay the \$50 rate for a maximum of 3 years or until they begin selling trees, whichever is first.
- 3) Growers in states other than Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi may join for \$60 annually. These growers will be listed on the SCTA website under "Other States" and will be non-voting members.



SCTA Advertisement, Exhibits, Sponsorships

Please feel free to inquire about advertising, exhibiting or sponsoring events with SCTA. SCTA's advertising platforms are the quarterly newsletters, the association's website membership page and the conference packet provided during our annual meeting. When you advertise with SCTA, your placement is with each platform for a 12 month period. Advertisers are requested to provide electronic file copies of logos, art work and text suitable for placement in Word documents.

SCTA's 12-month advertisement fee schedule is as follows:

One quarter page: \$200.00. A one quarter (approximate) page ad is placed in the quarterly newsletters, annual meeting packet and on SCTA's membership web page.

One half page: \$400.00. A one half (approximate) page ad is placed in the quarterly newsletters and annual meeting packet. A one quarter page ad will be placed on SCTA's membership web page.

Please note: when an advertisement is carried, it is for the following consecutive 12 months beginning with the next full quarter and not bound to a fiscal or calendar year.

Current advertisers, please note that 2016 annual fees are due. Thank you.



If you know something worthy of mention in the newsletter, including deaths of past members, please inform the executive secretary.

Southern Christmas Trees is a multi-page, quarterly newsletter of the activities and interests of the membership including ideas and information beneficial to the industry. The newsletter serves as the primary platform for information dissemination to membership. Content is provided by members and secured or derived elsewhere. Every effort is made to use factual information from established, credible sources. Subscription is a membership benefit. The primary venue for distribution is e-mail.

Michael Buchar, Executive Secretary, 12263 Brookshire Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70815 USA
E-mail: sctaes@gmail.com

A Message from the Executive Secretary

Dear Friends,

As your executive secretary, I am in a great position to observe, participate and appreciate the good will and commitment you as members and supporters have while providing memorable Christmas experiences. We all know how much dedication and hard work is required to grow that special tree in a beautiful working farm environment. All too often, your visitors do not understand what it takes for you to provide their special tree. The SCTA understands; I definitely do.

I have been involved with innumerable agricultural associations and interest groups throughout my 30 year career with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and for the past four years other tree associations as your representative. You have something special. Continue to make SCTA stronger.

The Christmas Season is a hectic time for you but also a wonderful time. Know that while I serve this position, I will always keep the real reason for Christmas in mind ... serving Him.

Merry Christmas,
Mike Buchart



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Newsletter Attachments:

- CTPB Letter of Introduction
- *Christmas Tree Information* article *Diseases of Leyland Cypress*