



# ECA NEWS

Quarterly Publication of Exotic Conifer Association

Vol. 1: No. 2

## Mediterranean Firs \* (part one)

Presentation provided by Rick Bates, Ph.D. Professor of Horticulture, Penn State University

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Abies borisii-regis</i>	Bulgarian King Boris fir
<i>Abies cephalonica</i>	Greek fir
<i>Abies alba</i>	European silver fir
<i>Abies x bornmuelleriana</i>	Turkish fir
<i>Abies cilicica</i>	Cilician fir
<i>Abies nordmanniana</i>	Nordmann fir
<i>Abies numidica</i>	Algerian fir
<i>Abies pinsapo</i>	Spanish fir

\*This list is not exhaustive; hybrids exist, as well as other lesser-known species.

What is the potential of these species for the landscape and Christmas tree industries?



**Abies cephalonica**

Typical foliage with male flowers (pollen buds).

Needles stand nearly vertical around branchlet.

Bottle-brush appearance.

No V-groove.

Needle tips can be rounded or pointed but not sharp, stout.



### **Abies cephalonica - Greek fir**



- Ht: up to 95', conical crown, attractive coarse foliage
- Dense, horizontal branching
- Very adaptable to wide range of soil conditions
- Very heat & drought tolerant; high survivability
- Locations: Graver Arboretum, Morris Arboretum, PSU
- Landscape potential: High

### **Abies x boris regis - King Boris fir (Bulgarian)**



- Native to the Balkans
- Naturally occurring hybrid between *A. alba* and *A. cephalonica*
- Ht: up to 90', variable form and foliage characteristics
- Heat & drought tolerant

cont on pg 6

# EXOTIC CONIFER ASSOCIATION

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937-671-5443

*The Exotic Conifer Association felt that it was of the utmost importance to get feedback from growers of exotic conifers from all over the country and Canada. The following people were kind enough to represent their regions.*

*It is very important for growers in their region to e-mail any experiences good or bad to their regional director so it can be shared with members of the Exotic Conifer Association.*

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## ECA Secretary's Notes

Spring is upon us and it starts to get busy at the farm. We already laid down spring fertilizer and lime and sprayed for white pine weevil. Spring tasks may be different where you live, but no matter, it is a busy time of year for most of us.

We have another great Newsletter. There are great articles with lots of helpful information. Take a long look and make copies to pass on to your friends and encourage them to join ECA. Looking ahead to the next issue, give us your best articles and opinions to share. Our next issue is planned for August.

Starting then, we are adding pages advertisers offering seed, seedlings, supplies and tools of the Christmas tree trade. The industry is changing with some of our older vendors retiring and others emerging to seek our business. Our 'Market Place' will feature low cost ads from our industry partners to make purchases easy. Look for info on how to add your business to the 'Market Place' section of our Newsletter on the ECA website.

Our web site (News Section) also has info on how to view the Christmas Tree Genetics and Tree Improvement Webinar. This a great introduction to the art and science of tree reproduction for genetic gain. A must for all those looking for better Christmas trees and a shorter growth cycle.

Look for more information on our Fall Field Day set for September 28th and 29th at the Arboretum on Blue Hill with Don Hilliker, owner of TreeHaven Nursery. As our plans are finalized, we will add the information to the ECA web site. Look for a schedule and listing of local hotels by June.

For all those in the Mid-West, the Ohio Christmas Tree Association will be partnering with the Mid-West Christmas Tree Association for a big Summer Meeting on July 7,8 Wooster, Ohio. Check out the MACT website for details. This is a great regional meeting with lots of vendors and the opportunity to save all that shipping cost on you seasonal supplies.

Don't forget to fill out and send in your 2017 ECA Membership form. Have a great spring.

## Plant Profile: Nordmann fir *Abies nordmanniana*

By: Bert Cregg, Ph.D. Michigan State University, Dept of Horticulture and Dept of Forestry

One of the great things about working with Christmas trees is that we get to work with some beautiful and fascinating plants. Over the years, many species of pines, spruces, firs, and even cedars have been used as Christmas trees. Each species has its unique appeal and every species has a story. Beginning with this issue of the Great Lake Christmas Tree Journal, I will present profiles of interesting Christmas tree species used in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere. I'll discuss the basic biology and ecology of the species, highlight some of the advantages or concerns of the species for Christmas tree production, and throw in a little trivia or other titillating tidbits.

Nordmann fir *Abies nordmanniana* Beauty, as they say, is in the eye of the beholder, but few can argue that Nordmann fir is among the most beautiful conifers found anywhere. Even famed plantsman Michael Dirr, who is not given to feint praise, calls Nordmann fir, "stately, elegant, perhaps the handsomest of the firs." Nordmann fir is by far the most popular Christmas tree species in Europe and there is increased interest in the species in the US.

The popularity of this species is due to several factors. First and foremost are the glossy, dark green needles, which are darker than almost any fir except for grand fir (*Abies grandis*). Nordmann fir needles are directed forward giving the upper surface of the branches a brushed, smooth appearance. There are two distinct white bands of stomata on the underside of the needles, which produces a silvery effect when the undersides of the branches are visible. But the needles are just part of the species' appeal. Nordmann has outstanding symmetrical form and a

relatively open branch structure with distinct whorls. These traits are valued in the European Christmas tree market where a layered appearance and room for candles are desired.

Nordmann fir is a vigorous grower under plantation conditions. European customers, however, do not like sheared trees so growers rely on plant growth retardants or phloem-wounding tools to control leader growth. Extensive research on the genetics of Nordmann fir has been conducted in Denmark and the Danes have typically favored the Ambrolauria seed source. However, tree improvement testing for U.S. environmental conditions and cultural practices is probably warranted. North Carolina State University geneticist John Frampton notes: "Ambrolauria has been widely touted as the best source of Nordmann fir in the United States, however, most Americans do not realize that this is based on the European preference for slow growth. In reality, other faster growing Nordmann fir sources are likely to be preferable for culture under an American shearing regime". American Christmas Tree Journal 43 (2): 4-11.

In its native range, Nordmann occurs on calcareous soils and therefore may tolerate a wider range of pH than other firs. Like most firs, however, Nordmann fir needs adequate drainage for best growth. Various sources list Nordmann fir as hardy from zones 4-6 or 4-7. In either case, it is well adapted in most of lower Michigan. In the ex-

otic fir species trial initiated by Dr. Mel Koelling at Kellogg Forest near Battle Creek, Nordmann fir has grown well. In addition, the Nordmann fir trees we transplanted from Kellogg Forest in 2003 continue to do well at our Horticulture Research Stations in East Lansing, Clarksville, and Traverse City. This broad adaptability suggests that Nordmann fir has significant potential as a Christmas tree species in much of Michigan.

Nordmann fir also responds well in container production. During the 8th international Christmas Tree Research and Extension Conference in Denmark conference participants toured Gl. Kirstineberg Planteskole, Europe's leading producer of container-grown Nordmann fir. The nursery produces approximately 100,000 three- to four-foot tall Nordmann firs as living Christmas trees each year. The trees are grown in three-gallon containers in a Pot-in-Pot system for up to four years to reach marketable size. The Kirstineberg nursery has worked extensively on their packaging, marketing trees to retail garden centers and as business gifts via direct shipping. Fast Facts on Nordmann fir: Native range: The native range of Nordmann fir forms a crescent along the east end of the Black sea in the mountains of Turkey, Georgia and Russian Caucasuses. It occurs at



cont. on pg 4

Plant Profile: Nordmann cont from pg 3

elevations between 3000 and 7000 feet in areas with rainfall in excess of 40" per year. Related species: The taxonomy of the Mediterranean firs is muddled due in part to wide variation within species and also hybridization among species. Turkish fir and Trojan fir are closely related to Nordmann fir and are sometimes listed as separate species (*Abies bornmülleriana* and *A. equi-trojani*, respectively) or as sub-species or varieties of *Abies nordmanniana*.

Ornamental cultivars: Nordmann fir is an outstanding landscape ornamental as a straight species. In addition, the American Conifer Society's Conifer Database ([www.conifersociety.org](http://www.conifersociety.org)) lists 14 named cultivars of *A. nordmanniana*, a handful of which are available from specialty nurseries. 'Golden spreader' is a dwarf, spreading form with bright gold foliage. 'Tortifolia' is a conical, intermediate grower (6-12" per year) with upturned needles. 'Prostrata' is a prostrate, ground covering form with dark green needles.

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## Not all presents under the Christmas tree are welcome

Posted on Dec. 14, 2016 by mike.merchant – Texas A&M [http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/Agrilife Extension](http://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/Agrilife%20Extension)



November and first three weeks in December are Christmas tree season in the U.S. All over the country, excited families take to the nearest tree lot to pick a recently cut tree for home. Some of these trees, however, come with more than just needles and flocking.

Giant conifer aphids in the genus *Cinara*, are among the most commonly encountered insects on fresh Christmas trees. These aphids form colonies on trees outdoors. Smaller colonies and lighter infestations are often missed by the tree farm, or by a bright-eyed family out on a U-cut adventure.

Conifer aphids are sometimes mistaken for ticks by horrified tree buyers. But ticks have eight legs, and are not likely to be brought into a home on a tree. On the other hand, aphids are harmless. They feed only on plants and will not bite. Nor do they live

long off a live tree, so you need not be concerned about them laying eggs on, or infesting, their ornaments.

Conifer aphids are more likely to be present on cut Christmas trees after a warm fall like this year. The warm weather encourages higher late season populations on trees. When introduced into a warm home after sitting in a cold tree lot, conifer aphids usually become active and many will move off the tree, as discovered by a local pest control professional who contacted me today (inspiring this post). His puzzled customer saw long-legged bugs crawling over the fireplace, kitchen, and bathroom of a small apartment—not linking them to the Christmas tree in the corner.

Insecticides are not necessary or desirable for control of conifer aphids or any other insects/mites on Christmas trees. If you bring home an infested tree and it has not been decorated, encourage take the tree outdoors, shake it well, and vacuum up as many of the bugs as possible. Or better yet, return the tree to the lot for a replacement. Be sure to inspect any new tree and pound the stump on the ground several times to check for live aphids before bringing it home. Take care not to mash conifer aphids on carpet or furnishings. They will stain.

Other pests sometimes brought in on Christmas trees include other species of aphids or adelgids, spruce spider mites, and even praying mantid egg cases. None of these are harmful, and either replacing the tree or vacuuming the offending bugs is usually sufficient. And don't forget that firewood can be another source of insects, especially beetles, during the winter months. A good preventive measure is to keep firewood outside until it is needed for a fire.

Luckily, none of these pests are especially common on live trees. Nor should they discourage you from bringing a fresh cut tree indoors. In my book the smell from a real Christmas tree more than makes up for the occasional arthropod hitchhiker.



# Christmas trees are now going for \$1K in NYC

By C.J. Sullivan, Priscilla DeGregory and Bruce Golding Dec. 5, 2016

Yuletide capitalism is running rampant this year — with the cost of a Christmas tree topping \$1,000 in one neighborhood.

Longtime Greenwich Village tree seller Heather Neville said Sunday that her tallest — and priciest — offering will command an astonishing \$77 per foot from any buyer who can't haul it home.

“This 13-foot tree — a beautiful fir — is \$750, and with delivery, installation with a stand and tip would be \$1,000,” said Neville, who bills herself as the NYC Tree Lady.

Neville, 40, broke down the add-ons as \$200 for the stand, \$25 for delivery and setup and \$20 each to the three or four men needed for the job.

She also justified the sky-high price tag — which could pay for 600-plus meals for the homeless at the Bowery Mission — by pointing to the exotic nature of the white fir on display at Seventh Avenue and 11th Street.



ECA member John Curtis wholesales exotic conifers to Ms Neville. Even he is surprised by how much his trees sell for on the streets of NYC

“They are not a traditional Christmas tree, so they are harder to get,” she said. “Not many farmers grow them. To find is a good one is difficult.”

Neville, who runs five other spots across Manhattan, gets all her holiday greenery from a secret source she identified only as “The Farmer.” She priced a hypothetical 15-footer at a whopping \$1,200, including delivery and setup.

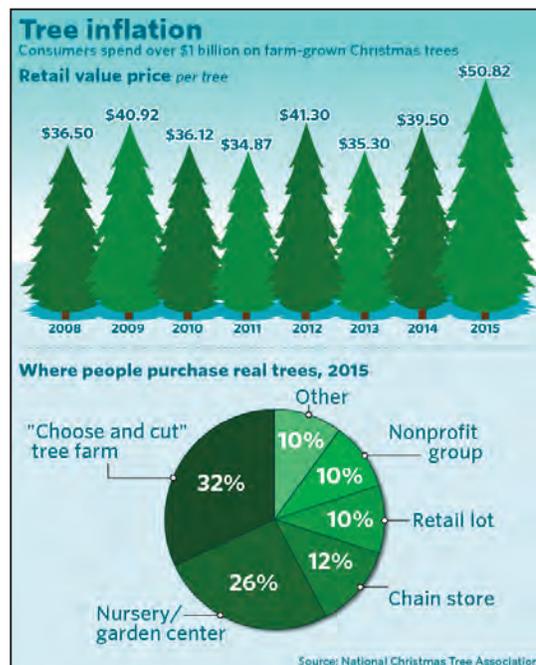
So far, her best sale was a 13-foot Nordmann fir that went for a relatively paltry \$500 “a few days ago,” she said.

Meanwhile, across the island, Tom Evans — a Con Ed worker from Commack, LI — was carrying away a nondescript 6-foot evergreen he bought for \$80 from a seller at First Avenue and 14th Street. Evans, 42, said blowing \$1,000 on a Tannenbaum went against “the Christmas spirit,” calling Neville “kind of the Grinch in the whole deal.”

“She’s catering to rich people or she is just after the money,” he said. “A tree is a tree, and there is no difference.”

East Village residents Adrian Chrzan and Jacquelyn Mitchell, both 30, were spotted lugging home a 5-foot Fraser fir they bought for \$100, stand included. “I wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between a white fir and any other tree,” said Mitchell, who works in finance. “They all look the same to me, so I’m just going to look for the best deal.” Chrzan, an investment manager, took the critique a step further: “We are from Connecticut and you can get a tree this size [there] for 20 bucks.”

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Mediterranean fir cont from pg 1



**Abies pinsapo  
(Spanish Fir)**

- Native to the highlands of Spain and Portugal.
- Needles shingled vertically around branchlet and point backwards.
- Short blue needle with sharp pointed tip.
- Potential ornamental use.

**Abies x bournmuelleriana Turkish fir**

- Native to Turkey
- Naturally occurring hybrid between *A. nordmanniana* and *A. cephalonica*
- Ht: up to 100', similar to Nordmann fir in appearance; very symmetrical, dense
- Heat & drought tolerant
- Landscape potential: High
- Christmas tree potential: ?



Turkish Fir, The Graver Arboretum, Bath, PA

**Abies numidica - Algerian fir**



Algerian fir, US National Arboretum, Washington DC

**Abies numidica  
Algerian fir**

- Ht: up to 70', crown densely branched, regular & conical; excellent form
- Heavily branched, in whorls, stiff branches
- Stiff needles, excellent color
- Very adaptable to soil conditions
- Heat & drought tolerant
- High survivability
- Landscape potential: High

**Abies cephalonica - Greek fir**



- Ht: up to 95', conical crown, attractive coarse foliage
- Dense, horizontal branching
- Very adaptable to wide range of soil conditions
- Very heat & drought tolerant; high survivability
- Locations: Graver Arboretum, Morris Arboretum, PSU campus
- Landscape potential: High

Typical foliage with female flower (cone).  
Shiny dark green foliage.  
Bottle-brush appearance.  
No V-groove



## Native True Fir Hybrids ~ by Matt Mongin

Lately, I have been looking at conifer hybrids as a source for new Christmas tree transplants. For example, Korean x Balsam or Korean x Veitch are becoming popular. We obtained examples of each of these from Darryl Bowersox, Hillview Farm, PA and displayed them for the Ohio and the Indiana Christmas Tree Association Winter meetings in January. I think these and other hybrids can offer a range of advantages over the pure strain conifers we typically buy, grow and sell. On top of this list are growth rate, foliage beauty, disease and insect resistance, and shearability. Bottom line- more dollars per tree in less time with less effort.

So what are these hybrids and where do they come from? Why bother with them?

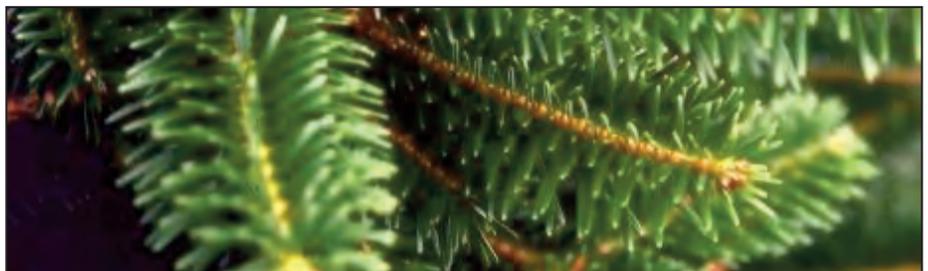
Hybrids offer a desirable addition to your Christmas tree farm for several reasons:

1. Faster growth
2. Better color
3. Disease and insect resistance
4. Later bud break
5. Winter hardiness
6. Better Structure and
7. Shearability among others

Natural hybridization occurs sometimes among true firs when closely related natural stands grow adjacent to one another. The conifer literature is full of examples. A rather recent and surprise example is a cross of



The Fralsam™ Fir is a hybrid cross developed by Weir Tree Farms and has been our top seller since it was rated "Best Overall" by the Wall Street Journal in November 2002. This hybrid incorporates the best characteristics of its parent trees, the Balsam and the Fraser, into one outstanding tree. This tree is late budding and misses the early spring frost and it is also resistant to a majority of diseases and insects. The Fralsam™ produces 10% to 20% more buds than its parent trees, therefore filling out to a very full tree with dense needle cover.



Fralsam have the silver blue look and needle retention of Fraser and the fragrance of Balsam

Fraser fir (female cone) and Concolor fir (pollen) reported in Michigan and shown by Dr. Bert Craig during the Christmas Tree Genetics and Tree Improvement Webinar Series. This is a beautiful tree with great Christmas tree potential.

Hybrids often, though not always, seem to inherit the best traits of their parents. Researchers and nurseryman have crossed numerous conifers by intermingling them in a seed orchard or through controlled pollination.

The best hybrids are derived from controlled pollination where the parents are selected and specifically crossed. Open pollination, even within a seed orchard leaves much to chance and is difficult to replicate.

Growth rate is a big hybrid advantage. Some growers report hybrids grow faster than their pure strain parents due to what is called 'hybrid vigor'. This translates to a taller, fuller tree and less time to market. If that is all planting hybrids offered, most

## Newer Holiday Firs Offer High Performance

*Turkish, Korean & Nordmann varieties stay fresh, retain needles and withstand heavy ornaments, growers say* by Anne Marie Chaker, published in the Wall Street Journal, Nov. 26, 2013

Resilient evergreens originating in faraway places are hitting the Christmas tree market in force this year.

Several seasons ago, U.S. growers planted these breeds—some with needles that flash silver, some with fragrant notes of citrus—and now are counting on them to inject some novelty and variety into sagging sales.

Two of the varieties—Nordmann fir (*Abies nordmanniana*) and Turkish fir (*Abies bornmuelleriana*)—are native to mountains around the Black Sea, with the third, Korean fir (*Abies koreana*), from mountain regions of South Korea. They have been in U.S. arboretums and plant collections for some time, but only in recent years have they been cultivated in large numbers as Christmas trees.

Growers are drawn to their toughness in the field and their performance in homes, says Bert Cregg, forestry and horticulture professor at Michigan State University.

Natural Christmas trees aren't a growth business. With more consumers turning to artificial trees, many with slender designs and attached lighting, the number of natural trees purchased fell 20% last year to 24.5 million trees, according to the National Christmas Tree Association. Dollar sales stayed relatively stable, at just over \$1 billion, as consumers spent on average 18% more per tree.

Thanksgiving weekend is typically the kickoff for Christmas tree shopping—and this year, there's more pressure than usual. The late Thanksgiving leaves only 26 days from turkey to tree, a full week less than last year.

Growers say the newer firs offer significant benefits. The Nordmann fir has an open, statuesque form and branches strong enough for heavy ornaments. Some retailers say it retains its needles longer than other varieties—for as long as a month if watered frequently. That compares with two to three weeks for most other trees, growers say.

The Turkish fir is full and elegant, like the Nordmann, and its needles are dark green. Korean fir has dense, silky needles and a pleasing lime fragrance. A virtue it shares with the Nordmann is the needles' bright, silvery underside, creating a flashy two-tone effect.

"What makes the Korean fir so neat is what I call 'the flash,'" says Jimmy Wade, a commercial airline pilot who schedules his time off so he can run a Christmas tree stand from Thanksgiving to Christmas in Memphis, TN. He gets the firs from a grower in WA.

"If you run your hands from bottom to top it has one of the prettiest silver-white flashes of any tree," Mr. Wade says. He recommends placing lights under the limbs instead of on top, to make the most of it.

Nordmann and Turkish firs are growing mostly in the Pacific Northwest, says Chal Landgren, Christmas tree specialist at Oregon State University's extension service. Korean firs prefer cooler climates and are found on many choose-and-cut farms in the upper Midwest. Many growers ship long-distance to retailers and even to consumers who order a tree online.

Retail prices are comparable to the classics. Mary Hauk, owner of Mary's Farm Market in Canton, Mich., says she pays a wholesale farmer about 30% more for Korean and Fraser firs than for Douglas or Concolor, but she sells all of them at prices ranging from \$8.25 to \$9.50 a foot. "We don't make as much on the Korean firs, but it's just something else to offer customers," she says.

Beyond newer varieties, some tree growers are experimenting with new "haircuts" for old favorites, like the Fraser fir. Rudy Zeilhofer, a buyer with Stein Gardens and Gifts, a Wisconsin chain of garden centers, says consumers have been drawn to the unusual profiles on some of his lots. Some growers stop pruning a year or two before harvest resulting in a tree with, instead of a missile shape, an irregular silhouette some growers are calling "Victorian."

It gives the customer space to hang ornaments that are really important to them, like heirlooms and keepsakes, and show them off a little better," Mr. Zeilhofer says. Last year the stores stocked 600 of the trees. "They were one of the first sellouts," he says. This year, he says, he expects to sell 1,800.

Innovation was overdue on Christmas tree lots, many of which were selling the same few varieties—Douglas fir, Blue spruce, Scotch pine—for years. Fraser firs are most often found east of the Rockies, with Noble firs in the

*cont on pg 10*

Christmas tree growers I know would be interested. Few are willing to wait 8-10 years for a paycheck when 6 years will do.

Fast growth is good and maybe enough but even better is fast growth and great foliage color. As the pictures in the sidebar show, hybrids are often gorgeous and readily attract customers. The Korean x Corkbark is an exceptional example.

Some hybrids appear to resist problem insects and disease better than pure strain native conifers. Bob Giardin and others report aphid, mite and gall midge resistance of Korean x Balsam. This hybrid and others also tolerates heavier soils without the root disease increasingly common among native firs.

Hybrids can and are often selected for late bud break. The Korean hybrids carry that trait from the Korean parent. Minimal winter burn seems to be a secondary but important advantage for those in areas where deep winter cold is common or late spring frosts occur every few years.

Some conifers used for Christmas trees seem to have poor leader dominance, and weak structure. Korean fir is a good example that

requires several years of attentive pruning to get a saleable Christmas tree. Yet Korean x Balsam or Korean x Veitch have straight central leaders and good overall structure requiring minimum shearing. Koreans also suffer from early coning, even among four and five foot trees. This is a characteristic they share with mid-west grown Fraser fir. Again, the hybrids of these species do not have this characteristic.

So the case for hybrid conifers, particularly true firs, seems solid and growing. We obviously need more testing in more locations with more growers participating and reporting their observations. The place to start is with collaborations of growers, University researchers and Extension specialists to commit and fund a multi-year development and testing project. Gone are the days when our Land Grant Universities will spear head such an effort. For the foreseeable future, our remaining research community is looking for collaboration, funding

and active participation of growers in such projects. If we want to leave a better industry behind us there is no better time than now to start.

*Next time, a modest proposal to create and evaluate native true fir hybrids.*



The Korean x Balsam Fir is a hybrid cross between the Balsam and Korean Firs. Weir Tree Farms has been working on this cross for several years and it is showing great promise. It possesses the great characteristics of the Korean Fir - excellent needle retention, a pleasant citrus smell, and the "white flash" of its needles - and by crossing it with the Balsam it also has a straighter leader and is overall a fuller tree. It will grow in a wide variety of soils.



Newer Holiday Firs cont 8

West. Virginia pine and Leyland cypress are popular in the South, Monterey pine in CA, and Concolor fir in the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states.

"If we put more variety out there, we will get people to buy a tree who typically wouldn't have before" says Rick Dungey, spokesman for the National Christmas Tree Association. It takes six to eight years for trees to grow to typical Christmas-tree size, he says.

Together, WA, OR and NC harvest more than half of all U.S. Christmas trees, and in 2010, university researchers from those states traveled to Turkey in search of seed stock that would produce a drought-tolerant and disease-resistant crop.

Dale Hawkins, owner of Sandy Hollar Farms, in Leicester, N.C., says he has planted Turkish and Nordmann firs on about 10 acres where he can no longer grow Fraser fir because of fungus in the soil. He is expecting to cut about 500 Turkish and Nordmann firs this year to sell to retail lots and stores.

Last Thanksgiving, when Mr. Hawkins cut his first Turkish, a 6-footer, he asked a retail lot to keep it outside and watch it for four weeks. "It had dried down some but was still fresh and pliable," he says.

John Hovey, manager of a car dealership outside Detroit, says he was wowed by a Korean fir last year from Frank and Cathy Genovese, owners of the Candy Cane Christmas Tree Farm, in Oxford, Mich. He was drawn to the full shape and dense, soft-looking needles. But it was the way the tree held up indoors that won him over. "I'm the first to admit I'm not the best at keeping trees watered," Mr. Hovey says, but the Korean seemed to hold on to its needles better than other breeds. "It just stayed up forever and the smell was amazing," he says. He ordered a 12-foot Korean fir this year.

Mark Brooks, owner of Mark's Northwest Christmas Trees in OR says when he saw his first Nordmann, it reminded him of "a Noble on steroids." Last year, the Nordmanns Mr. Brooks had left on his lot still looked fresh two weeks after Christmas, he says. This year, he is recalibrating his inventory of roughly 1,000 trees to 60% Nordmanns, up from 10% two years ago. "Everyone that gets it comes back and asks for it again," he says.

Dan Watkins, a Portland, Ore., sales manager for a truck-accessories manufacturer, says he used to buy Noble firs for Christmas, but in 2011 he discovered a Nordmann fir at Mr. Brooks's lot and never looked back. He appreciates how the full form and true-green color look in the living room.

Normally, he says, the post-Christmas chore of dragging the tree outside leaves a trail of needles "all the way to the car."

But with the Nordmanns, "there was no needle loss," he says. And the branches were so sturdy that it withstood the most punishing test of all: When the cat did her annual ritual of climbing the Christmas tree, it remained standing.

ECA member Larry Downey hits the lecture circuit speaking to growers in NJ at the Winter Meeting of NJCTGA. His presentations, one in the morning session and one in the afternoon, were very well received



**Fall Field Days**  
**Sep. 28th and 29th**  
**Arboretum on Blue Hill**  
**981 Jamison Road**  
**Elma, New York**

**with Don Hilliker, owner of TreeHaven Nursery**

When Don Hilliker, Jr. took over the open tree areas, he began to plant lesser known trees (mostly fir trees - "genis abies") from around the world. Japan, Russia, China and others. Focus has been on the flora of China as they are native to almost half of the world's true firs. Seedling orchards and various forms of breeding are in progress.



ECA member Larry Downey hits the lecture circuit speaking to growers in NJ at the Winter Meeting of NJCTGA. His presentations, one in the morning session and one in the afternoon, were very well received



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tel: (937) 429-1717



## Annual Membership 2017 Form

**FARM NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**WEBSITE LINK:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBER TYPE:**

*(Check Box that Applies)*

- INDIVIDUAL     **\$30**
- FARM-FAMILY   **\$40**
- SUPPLIERS       **\$50**

*Nurseries, Seed and Equipment Suppliers*

**OPTIONAL:**

*(Check Box that Applies)*

- Website Link - Member     **\$10**
- Website Link - Non-Member **\$20**

Send the completed form to: **Matt Mongin, 3006 Blue Green Drive, Beavercreek, OH 45431**



## A Message from ECA President Mike Laine

Hello everyone, I hope everyone has had a good winter. We just went through a period of extremely warm weather, with temperatures 30 degrees above normal. This has a potential of causing problems with bud abortion, especially with the Meyer spruce. We have cooled off a bit now though so hopefully the buds didn't become too active. I haven't noticed any winter burn on any trees yet which is a good sign.

I hope everyone has had a chance to view the webinars that the NTCA put out on tree improvement. They are very informative and well put together. It is the direction where are industry needs to be headed. I have been selecting trees to be left for seed production through the years and they are now ready to be pollinated by hand this year. Hopefully I can share some of my trials this spring if there are cone buds available. I would be interested in setting up pollen or seed exchange amongst growers. Or if people have produced a good cross pollinated seed and wanted to sell any of it we could have them list it on our website.

One of the biggest obstacles facing us as far as growing exotic varieties of trees is the shortage of seed available from seed dealers. Therefore, we need to set up our own seed orchards. If people would let a few trees grow out on their farms for future seed production it would enable us to have a better source of seed in the future.

Unfortunately, it takes many years for trees to begin producing seed but we need to begin somewhere. Another problem is that it is hard to find nurseries anymore that are willing to grow out small lots of seed for plugs. Most nurseries want a minimum order of 10000 trees before they will grow them out. As a group I would like to see if we could combine orders with small growers to put together a 10000 tree order. If anyone has any thoughts on this let me know.

We are interested in any pictures from any farms of exotics that are be grown for future newsletters. With smartphones, it is very easy to snap quick photos of trees which could be sent to Matt or I and we could share them with everyone. My email is northmnnursery@gmail.com.

Thanks and have a great spring.