

“NEW” CHRISTMAS TREE TOPS THE FIELD

AT THE

98TH ANNUAL PA STATE FARM SHOW

Last week in Harrisburg, a Mediterranean silver fir, also known as a Turkish fir, was crowned the 2014 PA Grand Champion “People’s Choice” Christmas tree. On the first weekend of the Farm Show, visitors from near and far have the opportunity to vote for their favorite Christmas tree, choosing among the seven first place trees of each conifer class. Of the 1,848 votes cast on Saturday and Sunday, the Mediterranean silver fir received 622 votes or 34% of all votes cast to be awarded the Grand Champion honor. A Fraser fir from Carbon County received 460 votes or 25% of the vote to become the Reserve Grand Champion tree while the third place entry, a Concolor fir grown in Schuylkill County, received 310 votes or 17% of the vote.

The 2014 PA Grand Champion “People’s Choice” Christmas tree was grown by Hill View Christmas Tree Farm of Middleburg, Snyder County. Owned and operated by the Bowersox family since 1954, Hill View has exhibited Christmas trees at the Farm Show for more than 25 years and it is the fourth time a tree from Hill View has been awarded the title of PA Grand Champion. By winning the state title, Hill View now has the opportunity to represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at the National Christmas tree contest to be held this summer, the winner of which has the honor to provide and present the official White House Blue Room Christmas tree to First Lady Michelle Obama. Once before, Hill View Christmas Tree Farm was awarded this honor in 2001 and presented the Blue Room tree, an 18 ½ foot Concolor fir, to First Lady Laura Bush. During the holidays, Hill View is open every weekend between Thanksgiving and Christmas and is located three miles north of Middleburg off of Route 104 behind Shade Mountain Winery.

Mediterranean silver fir is a relatively new Christmas tree species that is generating a lot of interest among consumers. First described by German botanist Joseph Bornmueller in 1925, this evergreen is native to the mountains of northern Turkey and is well-adapted to Pennsylvania’s climate. It shows a strong resemblance to Fraser fir but its needles are longer in length. However, its lush appearance and strong branching are superior to Fraser fir. For these reasons, its growing appeal as a cut Christmas tree has a very promising future.