

# **NCTA NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE CONTEST**

## **Contest Rules and Procedures**

*Established Feb. 2015*

The following items shall establish the Purpose of the Contest, Eligibility of Entrants, General Requirements for Entries, Entry Procedure, Judging Procedure, Contest Awards and Recognition, and Responsibility for Interpretation of the Contest Rules and Procedures.

### **Purpose of Contest:**

- To promote and encourage the use of farm-fresh Christmas Trees through media events and releases about the White House Christmas Tree presentation and the Christmas Tree at the Residence of the Vice President.
- To select and recognize NCTA members for outstanding Christmas Tree production. These growers shall receive the honor of presenting a farm-fresh Christmas Tree to the White House and the Vice President's residence (pending approval).

### **CONTEST RULES**

#### **Eligibility of Entrants:**

- Each NCTA affiliated chartered association is eligible to enter four trees in the NCTA Christmas Tree Contest.
- Entrants are to be the first and second place winners of the current year and the immediate previous year affiliated chartered association contests.
- If an affiliated chartered association has a biennial contest, that association may select the top four winners to represent that association in the National contest..
- Each person, family or farm may enter only one tree.
- Entrants shall be United States residents.
- Entrants shall be 'Members in Good Standing' of the National Christmas Tree Association and their respective affiliated chartered association.
- All parties agree that promotion of winning status and media coverage shall be coordinated through the NCTA office. (This aids NCTA in keeping its covenant with the White House to gain proper approvals and ensures that the program is used to promote all real Christmas Trees, not specifically one species or region. Promotional participation by the contest winners and his/her chartered association is encouraged.)
- All parties agree to promote the Real Tree industry in a positive manner. Winners will be an ambassador for the industry.
- The four farms who are selected as First and Second Grand Champions and First and Second Reserve Champions of the NCTA Christmas Tree Contest, and their immediate families, are not eligible to participate in the next NCTA biennial Tree contest immediately following the contest in which they won. Eligibility of the winners and their immediate family is restored beginning with the second biennial NCTA Contest subsequent to their win. (Example: all 4 winners selected in 2015 are next able to enter the National Contest in 2019 at the NCTA biennial Convention).

#### **General Requirements for Entries:**

- The five contest classes shall be: (A) true firs (B) Douglas-firs (C) all pines (D) all spruces and (E) cypress, cedar and other species.
- Eligible trees shall:
  - Be commercially cultivated.

- Be no less than 6 feet in height, and no more than 8 feet in height measured from the butt to the tip of the leader.
- Have a handle which shall be no less than 6 inches and no longer than 12 inches measured along the trunk from the butt to the bottom of the first branch(es).
- Not be artificially colored or flocked.
- Not have branches and limbs that are wired, tied or inserted in any fashion within the tree.
- Any tree failing to meet these requirements shall be disqualified by the tree contest committee prior to judging.

## **CONTEST PROCEDURES**

### **Entry Procedure:**

- Each entrant shall submit a completed Entry Form to NCTA to be received by NCTA at least 14 days prior to the contest. (Entry forms are available from the affiliate chartered association, on the NCTA website or can be faxed or mailed to the contestant. Entrants whose eligibility is determined less than 21 days prior to the contest can request and receive an extension for filing the form.)
- The completed entry form shall certify the entrant as one of the duly selected representatives and a 'member in good standing' of the contestant's affiliated chartered association. Affiliated chartered association certification shall be by the association executive director, president or executive secretary.
- Upon receipt of the Entry Form, NCTA shall certify that the entrant is a 'member in good standing' of NCTA.
- NCTA will provide directions to or details regarding the location of the contest site, as well as the list of contact persons, phone numbers and times for early arrivals.
- Each entrant is solely responsible for delivering his or her contest tree to the contest area.
- All trees must be presented to the check-in officials at least one half hour prior to the end of the specified set-up period. In the event that a backlog of trees prevents an entrant's tree from being measured in a timely manner, that entrant may be granted additional set-up time, not to exceed one half hour after it is certified as eligible. Trees which are not in place and ready for judging at the appointed time shall be disqualified.
- Check-in of all tree contest entries shall be conducted by an NCTA staff person and minimum of one contest committee member.
- Entrance to the tree check-in area shall be limited to the tree contest entrant and one (1) additional "helper" (i.e. spouse, family member, employee). No contestant or helper shall have entry to the contest area for any purpose prior to check-in of their tree.
- At check-in, tree stands must be removed and each entry will be measured for height and the length of handle. Entrants must lay down their tree for the handle to be measured. The handle shall be measured from the lowest branch to the butt of the tree. The height of the tree shall be measured from the butt of the tree to the tip of the leader.
- All adjustments and/or cuts to meet contest requirements shall be made prior to placement in the stand. All decisions of the check-in staff member and contest committee members are final.
- Upon approval, each entry shall be placed in a stand provided by the contest sponsor.
- Each tree shall have a sealed envelope securely tied to the tree containing a card with the grower's name, address, telephone number and address of the tree farm. The species of tree must be clearly printed on the outside of the envelope. The outside of the envelopes shall not identify the contestant.

- At the close of the contest set-up time, all contestants and helpers must leave the tree contest area. Any contestant or helper interfering with the administration of the contest or another contest entry during the set-up or voting period shall be subject to disqualification and/or suspension from future contests. Interference can be defined as “physical” (touching or moving another contest tree) or “verbal” (lobbying for or against specific trees); this determination is the purview of the NCTA Executive Committee.

### **Judging Procedure:**

- A panel of at least six (6) industry judges will determine the first, second and third place winners in each category.
- Industry Judges will not have access to the contest area until all contestants and their helpers are out of the area.
- Industry Judges may be growers, retailers, wholesalers, researchers or university personnel who have extensive knowledge of the Christmas tree industry.
- Industry Judges cannot be affiliated with any family, farm or individual participating in the contest.
- Industry Judges should be from varied geographic areas.
- Industry Judges will participate in a pre-contest orientation conducted by NCTA staff. At orientation, industry judges will be given scoresheets and an explanation of contest procedures.
- Each industry judge shall complete a scoresheet for each tree entered into the contest.
- Scoresheets that are illegible, incomplete, or otherwise compromised may be excluded from the final tallies.
- Completed scoresheets for each tree shall be averaged to determine the final score for each tree. The tree that receives the highest score in each class shall be declared the first place winner in that class. The tree that receives the second highest score shall be declared the second place winner and the tree receiving the third highest score shall be declared the third place tree.
- In the unlikely event of a tie score, the judges will be asked to re-evaluate trees involved in the tie and determine the order of placement for those trees.
- Non first and second place trees will be displayed with a sign showing the growers name and contest award, if applicable.
- All trees participating in the national contest should receive a participant award or ribbon.
- The first place winning trees shall be prominently displayed in a row and randomly, alphabetically labeled (A, B, C, D, E) for the determination of the First and Second Grand Champions.
- The second place winning trees shall be prominently displayed in a separate row and randomly, alphabetically labeled (F, G, H, I, J) for the determination of the First and Second Reserve Champions
- The two Grand Champion and two Reserve Champion trees shall be determined by popular vote of event attendees and a minimum of ten (10) non-industry consumers of real Christmas Trees.
- Each person casting a vote shall vote for one tree.
- Attendee votes will count for 50% of the total votes and the consumer votes will be mathematically weighted to account for 50% of the total.
- Soliciting votes for particular trees within 50 feet of the contest area may result in disqualification and/or suspension from future contests.
- The popular voting period will be open for no less than four (4) hours during the event.
- Ballots shall be counted and winners determined by a panel of three NCTA board members.

- The two Grand Champion and two Reserve Champion winners shall be announced at the awards presentation.
- Decisions of the judges and counting panel are final. Copies of scoresheets will not be provided to the contestants.

### **CONTEST AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

- After the judging, contest trees will remain in place until the awards presentation. Following the presentation, trees may be released to the persons that entered them. At the end of the event, remaining trees will be considered unclaimed and will be recycled/discarded.
- The top three places in each species class shall receive ribbons: First place – blue ribbon; second place – red ribbon; and third place – white ribbon. All contest trees will receive a green participant ribbon.
- The First and Second Grand Champions and the First and Second Reserve Champions will be determined by points. The first place tree with the highest points will be named the First Grand Champion. The first place tree with the second highest points will be named the Second Grand Champion. The second place tree with the highest points will be named the First Reserve Champion, and the second place tree with the second highest points will be named the Second Reserve Champion.
- The First and Second Grand Champions shall each be awarded a purple ribbon and a recognition plaque. The First Grand Champion will choose which year to furnish a tree for the Blue Room in The White House, the Christmas in the same year as the contest was held or the Christmas in the following year after the contest was held. The Second Grand Champion will furnish a tree for the Blue Room in The White House in the year that the First Grand Champion did not choose. Presentation of a Christmas Tree to The White House is subject to approval and permission granted by The White House.
- The First and Second Reserve Champions shall each be awarded a light purple ribbon and a recognition plaque. The First Reserve Champion will choose which year to furnish a tree for the Residence of the Vice President, the Christmas in the same year as the contest was held or the Christmas in the following year after the contest was held. The Second Reserve Champion will furnish a tree for the Residence of the Vice President in the year that the First Reserve Champion did not choose. Donation of the Christmas tree to the Vice President's residence is subject to approval and permission granted by The Residence.

### **INTERPRETATION OF RULES AND PROCEDURES**

- The tree contest committee shall consist of three NCTA board members appointed by the NCTA President.
- Interpretation of the Rules and Procedures for the NCTA National Christmas Tree Contest shall be the sole responsibility of NCTA's Executive Committee.