



2016

White House Christmas Tree
Media Materials



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

White House Receives 2016 Christmas Tree from NCTA

Washington, DC - (November 25, 2016) – The White House tradition of beautiful and stunning holiday decorations will soon be on display for the 2016 holiday season. The centerpiece of that tradition, the annual White House Blue Room Christmas Tree, was delivered to the White House today via horse-drawn wagon and presented by Dave and Mary Vander Velden, owners of Whispering Pines Tree Farm in Octonto, Wisconsin.

The tree, a 19 foot Douglas Fir grown in Pennsylvania, was presented to First Lady Michelle Obama by the Vander Veldens, who are the 2016 National Christmas Tree Association Grand Champion winners of the national tree contest. The NCTA has presented the White House with the Annual White House Christmas Tree since 1966. The Grand Champion grower wins the privilege of presenting a tree to the White House.

"It's a very big honor. In order to present a tree (to the White House), you have to win the national championship. It's like winning the Super Bowl or a gold medal at the Olympics. It doesn't get better than that," Dave Vander Velden said.

A tree from Whispering Pines Tree Farm was handpicked by Angella Reid, White House Chief Usher, along with White House Superintendent of Grounds Dale Haney, Olivia O'Neil with the White House Visitors Office and Jim Adams with the National Park Service. This 19 foot Balsam fir will be displayed in the Garden Room.

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The Vander Veldens began growing Christmas trees in 1984, first in Door County, Wisconsin, for about four years before moving to their present location in Oconto, where they operate Whispering Pines Tree Farm. The Vander Veldens entered the National Christmas Tree Contest four times before winning in 2015.

“Dave has participated in this contest for several years and has done really well and he finally came out on top,” said Tom Dull, President of the National Christmas Tree Association. “He was extremely excited for that to happen and I was excited for him as a first-time winner to be able to present the tree to the White House.”

2016 will mark the 51st year a member from the National Christmas Tree Association has presented the White House with a Christmas Tree. For Real Christmas Tree selection and care tips, or to find a Christmas Tree farm or lot in your area, go to RealChristmasTrees.org.

To enter NCTA’s National Tree Contest and compete for a chance to provide the White House Christmas Tree, NCTA members must first win their state/regional competitions in the previous 12 months.

For accompanying photos of the presentation event, email Ann@realchristmastrees.org or call (800) 975-5920.

ABOUT NCTA

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) is the national trade association representing the farm-grown Christmas tree industry. NCTA represents 29 state and regional associations, and more than 4,000 affiliated farms that grow and sell Christmas trees and business that provide related supplies and services. To learn more about the NCTA, visit www.realchristmastrees.org, or call (800) 975-5920.

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David Vander Velden
Whispering Pines Tree Farm



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Grand Champion Fast Facts

The White House Tree

- A member of the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA), who has won the National Christmas Tree Contest, has presented a tree each year since 1966, when Lyndon Johnson was president.
- This is the 51st tree presented by a member of the National Christmas Tree Association.
- The tree is traditionally presented to the First Lady, who accepts the tree on behalf of the White House.
- The tree serves as the centerpiece of the White House Christmas decorations.
- The tree must be between 18 and 19 feet tall to reach the ceiling where the power source for the lights descends.
- The 2016 presentation will likely take place in November.

Dave & Mary Vander Velden, Whispering Pines Tree Farm, Oconto, Wisconsin

- Whispering Pines Tree Farm started growing Christmas Trees in Oconto in 1988. The Vander Veldens grow Balsam fir, Fraser fir, White pine and Meyer spruce.
- The farm offers a wide variety of family Agritainment during the season including horse-drawn wagon rides, the Whispering Pines Express train, tractor rides, a holiday shop with thousands of ornaments and holiday decor, hot chocolate, Rudy the reindeer mascot, and visits with Santa in the Santa house.
- This was the fourth time the Vander Veldens had entered the National Christmas Tree Contest.

How did Dave & Mary Vander Velden earn the right to present the White House Tree?

- To compete in the National Contest, growers must first win their state or regional competition.
- The Vander Veldens won the 2015 contest at the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Growers Association.
- At the national contest, the trees are judged in a three-stage process involving a panel of industry experts, Christmas Tree professionals attending the conference and consumer judges.
- Dave and Mary won the National Contest in Spring Grove, IL, in July of 2015.
- The Vander Veldens entered a Balsam fir in the NCTA National Contest.

Real Christmas Tree Farming

- Real Christmas Trees are a renewable, recyclable agricultural product.
- An estimated 13,000 farms are producing conifers for the cut Christmas Tree market in America.*
- 309,365 acres in the U.S. are planted in Christmas Trees.*
- Approximately 310 million trees are growing that were planted by U.S. Christmas Tree farmers.
- On average there are 25-30 million Real Christmas Trees sold in the U.S. every year. **
- U.S. consumers spent \$1.04 billion on fresh, farm-grown Christmas Trees in 2014. **
- For every Real Christmas Tree harvested, up to three seedlings are often planted in its place.
- It can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of typical retail sale height (6-7 feet) or as little as four years, but the average growing time is six to eight years in most places around North America.

* USDA 2012 Ag Census and other sources

** Annual consumer polls by Harris Interactive



Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association

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Interesting Facts About Wisconsin Christmas Trees

- Over 657,000 Christmas trees were sold in 2014 ⁽²⁾
- Over 600,000 wreaths made each year in Wisconsin (estimated)
- \$16.2 million Annual Wisconsin Christmas tree sales ⁽²⁾
- 23,651 Acres of Christmas trees in Wisconsin ⁽¹⁾
- 868 Christmas tree farms in Wisconsin ⁽¹⁾
- Principal trees grown in Wisconsin: Balsam Fir, Fraser Fir, Canaan Fir, Scotch Pine, White Pine and Spruce
- White House Christmas Tree came from Wisconsin in 2011, 2003, 1998, 1988, 1976, 1970, 1966.
- Rank 5th in Sales of Christmas Trees in the U.S. ⁽²⁾
- Rank 5th in Number of Trees Cut ⁽¹⁾
- Rank 5th in Acres in Production ⁽¹⁾
- Rank 7th in Farms in Production ⁽¹⁾
- Size of farms ⁽¹⁾: 51% of farms (441) have less than 10 acres

20% (176) have 10-19 acres

19% (167) have 20-49 acres

10% (84) have 50 or more acres

Why buy a real tree?

Christmas trees are grown as a crop for you, just like pumpkins and flowers, with the intention to cut them. They are grown in rows with six-foot spacing between the trees.

Christmas tree farming is sustainable – 2 or 3 trees are planted for every one that is cut.

Trees are locally grown, providing jobs each year (planting, digging, re-planting, shearing, picking cones, mowing, harvesting, delivery, sales, machine maintenance, wreath making, office personnel).

Tree farms provide green space and habitat for wildlife. These farms are maintained in an early succession forest with young trees and plenty of ground covers. This provides habitat for deer and bear, ground birds such as turkey and quail, rodents that bring in predators such as hawks, foxes, and bobcats, and flowering plants that help feed butterflies, bees and all manner of insects.

Real trees are good for us – they utilize carbon dioxide, produce oxygen, and are recyclable through decomposition.

Celebrating the holiday season with a real Christmas tree is a long-standing tradition. In 1856, Franklin Pierce, our 14th President, brought the first Christmas Tree into the White House.

Information is taken from the (1) 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, (2) 2014 USDA Census of Horticultural Specialties
R.5/2016

2015 National Tree & Wreath Contest, July 24-25, Spring Grove, Illinois



First and second place trees ready for consumer and attendee voting.



Trees & wreaths ready for judging at the 2015 National Tree & Wreath Contest



Industry experts judge trees by species.



First place category winners at the 2015 National Tree Contest

High resolution photos available upon request.

The National Christmas Tree Association

Grand Champion Christmas Tree Growers



The National Christmas Tree

Association (NCTA) was founded in 1955 and represents more than 4,000 people involved in the production and sale of Real Christmas Trees and in related industries and services. NCTA provides educational programs to the industry and product information to consumers. NCTA recognizes Real Christmas Trees as an agricultural product and is committed to protecting our natural environment through education, research and local and national recycling programs.

Grand Champion Christmas Tree Growers

Since 1966, the winner of NCTA's National Christmas Tree Contest has presented a farm-grown Christmas Tree to the White House for display.

Vision

NCTA's vision is that a farm-grown tree is a part of every Christmas celebration.

Mission

NCTA's mission is to protect and advocate for the farm-grown Christmas Tree industry.

Contact NCTA

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<u>Year</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Tree Species Presented</u>
1966	Wisconsin	Howard Pierce	Balsam fir
1967	Ohio	Gordon Anderson	Blue spruce
1968	Indiana	Don Goodwin	White pine
1969	Ohio	Roy R. Pierce	Blue spruce
1970	Wisconsin	Calvin J. Frelk	White spruce
1971	North Carolina	Kermit Johnson	Fraser fir
1972	Washington	Alvin Hofert	Noble fir
1973	North Carolina	Homer & Bruner Sides	Fraser fir
1974	Michigan	Ed Cole	Concolor fir
1975	New York	Guy Cockburn	Douglas-fir
1976	Wisconsin	Ken Guenter	Balsam fir
1977	Washington	Alvin Hofert	Noble fir
1978	New York	Guy Cockburn	Veitch fir
1979	Pennsylvania	Eric & Gloria Sundback	Douglas-fir
1980	Indiana	Harry Eby	Douglas-fir
1981	Pennsylvania	Eric & Gloria Sundback	Douglas-fir
1982	North Carolina	Hal & Sarah Johnson	Fraser fir
1983	Washington	Ken & JoAnn Scholz	Noble fir
1984	North Carolina	Hal & Sarah Johnson	Fraser fir
1985	Michigan	Stephen Vander Wiede	Blue spruce
1986	Washington	Ron Palmer & Charles Burton	Fraser fir
1987	West Virginia	Eric & Gloria Sundback	Fraser fir
1988	Wisconsin	Irv & Alyce Daggett	Balsam fir
1989	Pennsylvania	Berkey Family	Fraser fir
1990	North Carolina	R. Bruce & Michael Lacey	Fraser fir
1991	Oregon	Gary & Audrey Sander	Noble fir
1992	Oregon	Bob Kintigh	Grand fir
1993	North Carolina	Wayne Ayers	Fraser fir
1994	Missouri	Lynn & Myron Schmidt	Blue spruce
1995	North Carolina	Ron Hudler & Danny Dollar	Fraser fir
1996	Ohio	Kenneth & Joan Scheetz	Blue spruce
1997	North Carolina	Sanford Fishel	Fraser fir
1998	Wisconsin	Jim & Diane Chapman	Balsam fir
1999	Washington	Ed & Cindy Hedlund	Noble fir
2000	Pennsylvania	Paul & Sharon Shealer	Douglas-fir
2001	Pennsylvania	Janice, Darryl & Aimee Bowersox	Concolor fir
2002	Washington	Ed & Cindy Hedlund	Noble fir
2003	Wisconsin	Jim & Diane Chapman	Fraser fir
2004	Washington	John & Carol Tillman	Noble fir
2005	North Carolina	Earl, Betsy & Buddy Deal	Fraser fir
2006	Pennsylvania	Francis Botek	Douglas-fir
2007	North Carolina	Joe Freeman	Fraser fir
2008	North Carolina	Jessie Davis & Russell Estes	Fraser fir
2009	West Virginia	Eric & Gloria Sundback	Douglas-fir
2010	Pennsylvania	Christopher Botek	Douglas-fir
2011	Wisconsin	Tom & Sue Schroeder	Balsam fir
2012	North Carolina	Rusty and Beau Estes	Fraser fir
2013	New Jersey	John Wyckoff	Douglas-fir
2014	Pennsylvania	Chris Botek	Concolor Fir
2015	Pennsylvania	Glenn & Jay Bustard	Fraser fir
2016	Wisconsin	Dave Vander Velden	Balsam fir

Quick Tree Facts



- ✓ According to a Harris poll, there were approximately 25 million Real Christmas Trees sold in the U.S. in 2015.
- ✓ There are approximately 310 million Real Christmas Trees currently growing on Christmas Tree farms in the U.S. alone, all planted by farmers.
- ✓ North American Real Christmas Trees are grown in all 50 states and Canada. Eighty percent (80%) of artificial trees worldwide are manufactured in China, according to the U.S. Commerce Department.
- ✓ Real Trees are a renewable, recyclable resource. Artificial trees contain non-biodegradable plastics and possible metal toxins such as lead.
- ✓ There are local Christmas Tree recycling programs throughout North America which utilize the plant material for numerous purposes.
- ✓ Between January and May, 1 to 3 seedlings are planted at farms to replace trees harvested for the previous Christmas.
- ✓ There are about 309,365 acres in production for growing Christmas Trees in the U.S.; much of it preserving green space.
- ✓ There are close to 13,000 farms growing Christmas Trees in the U.S., and an estimated 100,000 people employed full or part-time in the industry.
- ✓ It can take as many as 15 years to grow a tree of typical height (6 - 7 feet) or as little as 4 years, but the average growing time is 6 to 8 years.
- ✓ The top Christmas Tree producing states are Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Washington.
- ✓ Common Christmas Tree species (in alphabetical order) are: Balsam fir, Douglas-fir, Fraser fir, Noble fir, Scotch pine, Virginia pine and White pine. But there are more than 35 species of conifers grown as Christmas Trees.

Source: USDA National Ag Statistics Service (NASS), National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) and your local Christmas Tree professional. For more information, visit www.realchristmastrees.org.



Real Christmas Trees: The Environmental Choice

Each holiday season, shoppers find themselves confronted with a choice: Celebrate with a fresh, real tree, or one that is artificial plastic or aluminum. Most people realize that the best choice has always been the traditional and natural choice -a Real Christmas Tree.

Consider this:

- While they're growing, Real Christmas Trees support life by absorbing carbon dioxide and other gases and emitting fresh oxygen.
- Real Christmas Trees are grown on farms just like any crop. Harvesting a Christmas Tree is no more damaging to the environment than harvesting an ear of corn.
- To ensure a constant supply, Christmas Tree farmers plant new seedlings to replace harvested trees.
- Artificial trees are a petroleum-based product manufactured primarily in Chinese factories.
- The average family uses a fake tree for only six to nine years before throwing it away, where it will remain in a landfill indefinitely.
- Christmas Trees are often grown on soil that does not support other crops. The farms that grow Christmas Trees stabilize the soil, protect water supplies and provide refuge for wildlife.
- Farm-grown trees are biodegradable, which means they can easily be reused or recycled for mulch or other purposes.
- The polyvinyl chloride (PVC) used in most artificial trees has been boycotted by environmental and health groups.
- Swedish researchers found that Real Trees are five times more environmentally compatible than fake trees.
- American Forests, a world leader in tree planting for environmental restoration, has publicly endorsed the commercial growing and use of farm-grown Christmas Trees.
- Real Trees can be recycled in a number of ways, including mulch for parks and trails, in lakes and ponds for fish habitat, dune and coastline restoration efforts and as boiler fuel for factories.

To find out more about the environmental benefits of farm-grown trees, visit the National Christmas Tree Association at www.realchristmastrees.org/Environmental-Benefits

Christmas Tree Folklore and History



- 1510, the first decorated Christmas Tree is in Riga, Latvia. Early Christmas Trees are decorated with paper, fruits and sweets.
- 1531, the first retail Christmas Tree lots are started in German cities.
- By the 1600s, Christmas Trees are decorated with ribbon, tin shapes, small books and lace as well as food.
- 18th century, the first recorded Christmas Tree decorated with lit candles.
- 1777, the tradition of the Christmas Tree is brought to Colonial America by Hessian troops fighting for Britain in the Revolution War.
- 1804, U.S. soldiers stationed at Fort Dearborn (now Chicago) bring evergreen trees into their barracks at Christmas.
- 1842, Charles Minnegrode introduces the custom of a decorated Christmas Tree in Williamsburg, Va.
- 1851, Mark Carr opens a retail Christmas Tree lot in New York City, the first in the United States.
- 1856, Franklin Pierce, our 14th President, brings the first Christmas Tree into the White House.
- 1923, President Calvin Coolidge starts the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony now held every year on the Ellipse between the White House and the Washington Monument.
- 1966, members of the National Christmas Tree Association start the tradition of presenting a Real Christmas Tree each year to the First Lady for display in the White House.

Source: National Christmas Tree Association and your local Christmas Tree professional. For more information contact: Ann O'Connor 800/975-5920 or Ann@realchristmastrees.org.

Tom Dull – National Christmas Tree Association President

Tom Dull is the owner of Dull's Tree Farm, which encompasses 45 acres of Christmas trees strictly for choose-and-cut harvest, a retail wreath business, gift shop, and a bed & breakfast. Tom and his wife, Kerry, along with their son and daughter-in-law have undertaken expansion into pumpkins and a corn maze and other fall Agritourism activities. They also row crop 1,900 acres of corn and soybeans.



The farm has been selected by the Indiana Convention and Visitors Bureau as the Best Christmas Tree Farm in Indiana. Tom has also been the Featured Farmer at the Indiana State Fair, and the winner of the Arnold Award for Rural Preservation. Tom is a licensed auctioneer and serves on several Boards of Directors for area associations.

Tom and Kerry have two children and two grandchildren. Tom is a graduate of Purdue University with a B.S. in Ag Economics.