

NCTA NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE CONTEST

Contest Rules and Procedures

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 are eligible to be considered for 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 of the 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 NCTA and their respective affiliated chartered association at the time of affiliated/state contest to be eligible to enter the NCTA contest
- 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. The winners will become ambassadors for the industry by doing so.

- The two farms who are selected as Grand 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: the 2 winners selected in 2019 are next able to enter the National Contest in 2023 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 nor 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 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 affiliated 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, may 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 is a member in good standing of both the contestants' affiliated chartered association and NCTA. 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 was a 'member in good standing' of NCTA and their affiliated charter association, at the time of the affiliated chartered association contest. (effective 8-31-2019)

- 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/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 that 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 a member of the NCTA contest committee and appointed helper.
- 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 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. Height shall be measured using a pole or rod inserted along the length of the trunk.
- All adjustments and/or cuts to meet contest requirements shall be made prior to placement in the stand. All decisions of the check-in committee 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 attached to the tree containing a card with the grower's name, address, telephone number and address of the farm. The species of the tree must be clearly printed on the outside of the envelope. The outside of the envelopes shall not identify the contestant in any way.
- 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 Procedures:

- A panel of at least three (3) pre-selected 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 the NCTA tree contest committee. At orientation, industry judges will be given score sheets and an explanation of contest procedures.
- Each industry judge shall complete and turn in a score sheet for each tree entered into the contest.
- Upon turning in their score sheet, each judge will wait until a committee member quickly peruses each sheet for accuracy, completeness and legibility.
- Completed score sheets 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 winner.
- 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-place and second-place winning trees will be displayed with a sign showing the growers name and contest award, if applicable.
- All trees participating in the NCTA contest shall receive a participant award or ribbon.
- The first and second place winning trees in each category shall be alphabetically labeled using letters (A thru J), and prominently displayed, in random order, in a row, for the determination of the Grand and Reserve Champion trees.
- The two Grand Champion and two Reserve Champion trees shall be determined by popular vote of the farms in attendance. Each farm in attendance shall be given one ballot.
- Each farm casting a ballot shall vote for **TWO** trees. The names of the two top vote recipients will each be placed in separate envelopes marked "Grand Champion". The two trees receiving the next highest votes will be placed in separate envelopes marked "Reserve Champion". When the presenter announces the White House Tree they will pick an envelope to determine which one goes for the first year, and the next will be for the following year. The same will follow for the Reserve Champion trees.
- Soliciting votes for particular trees 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 contest committee are final. Copies of score sheets 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, the remaining trees will be considered unclaimed and will be recycled/discarded.
- The top three places in each species class, as determined by the judges, shall receive ribbons: First place – Blue, Second place – Red and Third place – White. All other contest trees will receive a green participant ribbon.
- The Two Grand Champion trees shall each receive a purple ribbon and a recognition plaque stating the year they won the contest for and will be considered to furnish a tree for the White House for that year. **Presentation of a Christmas Tree to The White House is subject to approval and permission granted by The White House.**
- The Two Reserve Champion Trees will shall each receive a light purple ribbon and a recognition plaque stating the year they won the contest for and will be considered to furnish a tree for the Residence of the Vice President for that year. **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.

(2-19-2019)