

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 Procedures, Judging Procedures, Popular Vote Procedures, Determination of Winners Procedures, Contest Awards and Recognition, and 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 **must** 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.
 - If an entrant is representing a state without a contest, that entrant must be a 'Member in Good Standing' of NCTA and their respective affiliated chartered association for the current year and the year prior to the National contest.
- Entrants are to be the top two 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.
 - If an affiliated chartered association does not have a contest, that association may select up to four members to represent that association in the National Contest.
- Each NCTA membership, whether it be a person, family, or farm, may enter only one tree.
- Entrants shall be United States residents.

- 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 two winners selected in 2019 are next able to enter the National Contest in 2023 at the NCTA Biennial Convention.)

General Requirements for Entries

- The seven contest classes shall be (A) North American true firs (B) all other true firs (C) hybrid crosses (D) Douglas firs (E) all pines (F) all spruces, and (G) cypress, cedar and any species not included in the previous classes.
- 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 Procedures

- Each entrant shall submit a completed Entry Form to NCTA to be received by NCTA at least 14 days prior to the contest. Forms must be totally complete when submitted, including the tree category, or it cannot be accepted. (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.
- 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 arrival.
- 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/delegate 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 will be marked as being measured and approved by a check-in judge before being allowed into setup area, and shall be placed in a stand provided by the contest sponsor
- Each tree will 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 must 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, judging, or voting period will 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.

- All trees will remain as originally placed at start of contest during the judging and voting process.

Judging Procedures

- A panel of at least three (3) pre-selected Industry Judges will assess and judge the first phase of the contest.
- 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 must 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 averaged score will then determine the first, second, and third place in each category.
- 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.
- Criteria used on judging sheets will remain the property of NCTA and will not be shared or used as public criteria. ~~unless approved by the NCTA board.~~
- A contestant may request to receive a copy of the judges’ scoring sheets for his/her tree only.

Popular Vote Procedures

- After the judging has taken place, the top two trees in each category will be assigned letters.
- Each registered NCTA membership will then vote, selecting from the top two trees in each category.
- Each NCTA membership, whether it be an individual, family, or farm, in attendance and registered for the meeting will be given one ballot. All sections of NCTA membership are eligible to vote if they are registered.
- Each NCTA membership casting a ballot will vote for **TWO** trees. Each will have two votes equating to one for the even year grand champion and one for the odd year grand champion. Ballots with less than two trees voted for will be disqualified.
- Soliciting votes by word, print, or social media, either during or preceding the contest, for particular trees may result in disqualification and/or suspension from future contests.
- The popular voting period will be open for no less than three (3) and no more than four (4) hours during the event, depending on the time available.

Determination of Winners Procedures

- The vote count of the registered members will then be totaled to determine the Grand and Reserve Grand Champion trees.
 - The two Grand Champion trees shall be the two trees with the highest number of total votes, the two Reserve Champion trees shall be the trees with the third and fourth highest total votes.
 - In the event that a tie occurs after the popular votes are cast and tallied, placement shall be determined by the scores earned during the initial judging phase.
- Ballots will be counted and winners determined by a panel of three NCTA board members.
- Decisions of the judges and contest committee are final. Copies of score sheets will not be provided to the contestants.
- The names of the two top point recipients will each be placed in separate envelopes marked “Grand Champion.” The two trees receiving the next highest point totals will be placed in separate envelopes marked “Reserve Champion.” When announcing the White House Tree, the presenter will randomly pick one of the two Grand Champion envelopes to determine which winner goes the first year; the remaining envelope will represent the following year. The same procedure will apply for the Reserve Champion trees.

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 two Grand Champion and two Reserve Champion winners will be announced at the awards presentation.
- The top three places in each species class, as determined by points, will receive ribbons: First place – Blue, Second place – Red, Third place – White. All other contest trees will receive a green participant ribbon.
- The Two Grand Champion Trees will each receive a purple ribbon and a recognition plaque stating the year for which they won the contest 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 each receive a light purple ribbon and a recognition plaque stating the year for which they won the contest 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.
- The NCTA Executive Committee will have the right and responsibility to amend the rules or tree donation in the event of an emergency or unavoidable circumstance.

(11-1-2024)