



# PLP News

**The Newsletter of  
The Plant Pathology  
Department  
Volume 3-Issue 8  
Nov./Dec. 1999**

## Christmas Trees: Beyond the Holiday Season



Each year more than 30 million American families bring a live Christmas tree into their homes to become the warm and glowing center of their

Christmas celebration. Years ago, most Christmas trees were cut wild, but as demand increased and the supply of suitable wild trees decreased, growing Christmas trees in plantations became more and more common.

Today growing Christmas trees is big business. More than 30 million trees are harvested each year in the United States, nearly 10 million of these in the Lake States of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In 1986, there were about half a billion trees growing in 43 states. About 7,500 year-round workers plus 100,000 part-timers are needed to plant and tend these trees. It takes constant and skilled care for 8-15 years to produce a salable, high-quality Christmas tree.

During this time, the trees face many hazards; adverse weather, fire,

insects, and even animal damage. But the most critical threat is usually disease. Learning to identify these diseases is the first step in prevention and control.

Diseases affecting trees in their natural settings may be relatively harmless, but in intensively managed nurseries and plantations, they can have a devastating impact. Disease can reduce growth, produce unsightly foliage, increase susceptibility to insects and other diseases, and even kill trees. For information on a specific Christmas tree and its diseases, a good source is the *Pocket Guide to Christmas Tree Diseases* which is available online at [www.ncfes.umn.edu/pubs/pgctree/pgctree.html](http://www.ncfes.umn.edu/pubs/pgctree/pgctree.html)

Most tree types discussed are those of more temperate climate that are imported into Florida in large quantities during the holiday season. Such trees include: Scotch Pine, Austrian Pine, Red Pine, White Pine, Douglas Fir, Colorado Blue Spruce, Balsam Fir, and White and Norway Spruce.

Each year, Florida Christmas tree growers produce over 120,000 freshly cut quality trees to enhance the joy of the holiday season. Christmas

trees are an agricultural crop, grown specifically on Florida farms and plantations to be harvested for use at Christmas.

### Christmas Tree Farming in Florida.

Florida Christmas tree growers, as a rule of thumb, plant two or three trees for every tree cut. The market for fresh, Florida-grown Christmas trees expands each year as more and more families enjoy the freshness, quality, and fragrance of what the state has to offer.



Trees are nature's way of cleansing and purifying the air. Each acre of Christmas trees produces enough oxygen to meet the daily oxygen requirements of eighteen people. Tree plantations provide important wildlife habitat and aquifer recharge areas. Trees are great benefactors of the land. They prevent soil erosion and provide scenic greenbelts throughout the state.

Many tree farmers allow customers to choose and cut their own



Christmas trees. This has helped renew the tradition of the entire family selecting and cutting the Christmas tree.

The preferred species of tree is often handed down from generation to generation. In Florida, Red Cedar, Virginia Pine, Sand Pine, Spruce Pine and Leyland Cypress are grown specifically for use as Christmas trees.

A Christmas tree, like a bouquet of flowers, likes it cool and safe, so don't put your tree near a fireplace, heat source, or television set. Let the tree remain outdoors or on a cool porch or patio until ready to decorate.



### **Recycle your tree!!!**

After the holidays, don't throw your tree away. Remember that trees are a renewable resource. Here

are some tips on what to do with your tree after the holidays:

1) Place the tree in the garden or backyard and use it as a bird feeder and sanctuary. Fresh orange slices or strung popcorn will attract the birds and they can sit in the branches for shelter

2) A tree is biodegradable; its branches may be removed, chipped, and used as mulch in the garden. Many communities utilize a wood chipper to make mulches for flowerpots. Once the branches are removed, the trunk can be chopped for firewood.

3) Large quantities of used trees make effective sand and soil erosion barriers.

4) Sunk into fish ponds, trees make excellent refuge and feeding areas.

5) Woodworking hobbyists can make a multitude of items including buttons, gavels, and candlestick holders from the trunks of recycled Christmas trees.

Whether you celebrate the holidays or not, it might be the perfect time to shop for a "Christmas tree" and make it a part of your landscape.

### **Christmas Tree Facts**

- Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since about 1850. Until fairly recently, all Christmas trees came from the forest.
- Thirty-four to thirty-six million Christmas trees are produced each year and 95 percent are shipped or sold directly from Christmas tree farms.
- California, Oregon, Michigan, Washington, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina are the top Christmas tree producing states. Oregon is the leading producer of Christmas trees - 8.6 million in 1998.
- The best selling trees are Scotch pine, Douglas fir, Noble fir, Fraser fir, Virginia pine, Balsam fir, and white pine.
- Over one million acres of land have been planted in Christmas trees. The industry employs over 100,000 people. Many Christmas tree growers grow trees on a part-time basis to supplement farm and non-farm income.

- More than 2,000 trees are usually planted per acre. On an average 1,000-1,500 of these trees will survive. In the North, maybe, 750 trees will remain. Almost all trees require shearing to attain the Christmas tree shape. At six to seven feet, trees are ready for harvest. It takes six to ten years of fighting heavy rain, wind, hail and drought to get a mature tree.
- Selling directly to the consumer has become a major market for many Christmas tree farms. Some tree farms offer the consumer the chance to select his own tree while it is still growing in the tree farm.

### **For More Help...**

**Consult** - an expert to identify the cause of puzzling pest problems in Christmas trees.

Proper identification is extremely important if controls are to be effective.



**Read** - books and brochures about Christmas trees. (Highly recommended: CHRISTMAS TREE PEST MANUAL, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402)

**Join** - the National Christmas Tree Growers Association. It provides members with a number of valuable services including the helpful "American Christmas Tree Journal".

**Join** - your local Christmas Tree Growers Association, and attend its meetings. They often include valuable field trips that will allow you to profit

1999

from the experience of established growers.

**(Ed. Note:** The above information is available from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, North Central Forest Experiment Station, USDA Forest Service, National Christmas Tree Association, and the University of Illinois Extension.)

Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and colleagues of our department...

Congratulations to **Jessica Roberts**. Jessica was in the first class of students to graduate from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Honors Program. We're very proud of your accomplishments!

**Dr. Charudattan** was in Brazil from Oct. 16 to Nov. 11 to collect a rust fungus for the biocontrol of waterhyacinth. The other highlights of his trip include: two seminar presentations entitled "Bioherbicides: Status and Prospects" at the University of Sao Paulo, Piracicaba, S. P. and "Biological Control of Weeds with Plant Pathogens" at the State University of Maringa, Maringa, P. R. Charu also visited the lab of his former grad student, Dr. Dauri Tessmann, at the State University of Maringa.

Coffee Break Schedule and Birthdays for December 1999 and January 2000

### Friday Coffee Break

12-10 : Hiebert  
12-17 : Charudattan  
12-24 : Holiday!  
12-31: Holiday!  
1-7 :Gabriel  
1-14 : Jones



1-21: Kimbrough, Kucharek, Song  
1-28 : Pring and Chourey  
2-4 : Niblett

### Birthdays!!

12-11: Robert Stall  
12-23: Margarita Ferwerda-Licha  
1-6 : Xiomara Sinisterra  
1-15 : Jessica Roberts  
Richard Berger  
1-16 : George Agrios  
1-21 : Bob Kemerait  
1-25: Abdul Al-Saadi  
1-28 : Dana LeCuyer  
1-30 : Kris Beckham



### Important Dates

**Holiday** - Christmas, Friday, December 24, 1999.

**Holiday** - New Year's, Friday, December 31, 1999.

**Graduation** - December 18<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 pm for College of Agriculture.

**Holiday** - Martin Luther King's Birthday, Monday, January 17, 2000.

### Department Adopts A Family

This season the Plant Pathology Department has decided to adopt a less fortunate family through the Salvation Army. We would like your help in making this a brighter holiday season for this family. Donations of clothing and NEW, unwrapped toys are needed as well as wrapping paper and ribbon for the mother to wrap the gifts. The family is a single mother with three children : Vernon, a 5-year-old boy with sz. 6 pants and small shirt; Daisy, a 7 year-old girl with sz. 10 pants and medium shirts; and Deltrice, a 10 year-old girl with size 12 pants and large shirts. Please contact Karen in the front office for more information on what needs to be donated and

where to deliver the items. Donations must be received by Dec. 15.

## Twas a Star Trek Christmas

"Twas the night before Christmas on the Enterprise-D,  
On a routine short hop to Starbase 03,  
With Data on duty in the command chair,  
At Warp 6, the Enterprise soon would be there.

Just for something to do while the other crew slept,  
He scanned where historical records were kept --  
And with a blink of his eye and a cock of his head,  
"Intriguing! Tomorrow is Christmas!" he said.

But no one was stirring, and he sought to find why,  
And so he buzzed Geordi, who awoke with a sigh:  
"Christmas? It's only an old holiday --  
Now just let me get back to sleep, okay?"

"But is to wish Merry Christmas not human to do?"  
And so Data wished it -- to the whole ship and crew.  
Everyone on the Enterprise awoke from this clatter --  
Picard rushed to the bridge to see what was the matter.

"What is the meaning of this noise, Mister Data?"  
"Sir, is it not Christmas--?" "We'll discuss it much later!"

Just then Worf said, "Captain -- a Klingon Prey Bird!  
Its hull has been damaged -- it's uncloaking, sir."

1999

"On screen," said Picard, as the Klingon ship hailed:

"Federation vessel, our Life Support systems have failed!

A strange ship attacked us, inflicting the worst, (though naturally, of course, we'd fired on it first)."

The Klingons beamed over, and the senior staff met, To try and determine the source of the threat.

Said Picard, "Mister Data, an assignment for you:

Give all of these Klingons something to do!

They think it's the Romulans we should look for,

Get them all off the bridge, before there's a war!"

So Data departed, while the rest of the crew

Wondered: Romulans? Ferengi? If not them, then who?

Said Worf, "Sir -- disturbance on Holodeck Three!"

The entire bridge crew ran down there to see.

Roared Picard, "Mister Data, what the devil is this!!"

"Sir, I have taught the Klingons how to celebrate Christmas."

And so there they were -- on holodecks 3, 4 and 5

With synthohol, singing and Rokeg Blood Pie!

Soon the Big E was rocking with holiday cheer

Friend, foe, and family came from both far and near.

The Romulans showed up with some Romulan Ale,

The Ferengi brought goodies for free - not for sale!

But a strange ship was coming, the captain was told,

With one crew member only, and a huge cargo hold.

Said the Klingons, "It's the strange ship that fought us -- attack!"

Said Picard, "On Christmas? -- Mister Worf, just hold back."

And then as the ship came into view, Onscreen came its captain -- none other than Q!

He wore a white beard and a suit of deep red...

"Joyeux Noel, mon captain," was what Santa Q said.

"Tell those Klingons next time to not go so berserk.

You need good defense systems in this line of work.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'll be warping away...

Did you think anyone else could do this job in one day?"

"I'm sensing emotion," said Counselor Troi,

"Peace in the galaxy, Good Will and Joy."

And they stood on the bridge and watched Q take flight, shouting,

"MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!"

#### News from Bradenton....

Dr. Edward A. Hanlon, Interim Center Director of the University of Florida's Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Bradenton, is pleased to announce the appointment of a Visiting Scholar, Mr. Harukuni Horita, Researcher with the Hokkaido Ornamental Plants and Vegetables Research Center in

Japan. Mr. Horita is working under the direction of Dr. Robert J. McGovern, Plant Pathologist, and assisting with research on the diagnosis, characterization, and integrated management of diseases affecting commercial ornamental and vegetable production.

Mr. Horita and his wife, Kyoko, and daughters Hotaru and Mizuki, will reside in Bradenton during their stay in the U.S.

University of Florida

Gulf Coast R.E.C

5007 60<sup>th</sup> Street East

Bradenton, Florida 34203

(T) 941/751-7636 (F) 941/751-7639

#### New Graduate Student Update: Fall 1999

During this fall the Plant Pathology Department has had the pleasure to become the new home for more new students. With different backgrounds and scientific interests, they will be offered the opportunity to learn more about Plant Pathology with our established team, and we hope, they will have a lot of fun! Let's welcome Aaron Hert, Alba Nava, Curt Colburn, Jessica Roberts, Lisa Nodzson, and Matthew Brecht.

Aaron and Alba were kind enough to give us some information on their background and research.

**Aaron Hert:** My research project for my M.Sc. is with *Xanthomonas campestris p.v. vesicatoria*. Dr. Jeff Jones is my major professor. My previous experience in plant pathology was working from September of 1998, to August of 1999, with Dr. Pamela Roberts at the University of Florida's Research and Education Center in Immokalee, FL. I am originally from Quincy, Illinois. I graduated with a BS in

1999

Biological Sciences in May of 1998, from Quincy University in Quincy, Illinois.

**Alba Nava:** I'm from Maracaibo, Venezuela. I graduated from the University of Zulia State (Agronomy Engineer) in 1982, and received my M.Sc. degree at the Central University of Venezuela (in Agronomy) in 1986. I am a professor at University of Zulia State, where I started a project in tomato virus detection in 1993. The most frequent viruses observed in commercially grown tomato areas are geminiviruses, producing severe damage on the crop. In fact, we don't have any resistant varieties, and the only control is to use preventive practices. For this reason, I started my Ph.D. in Plant Pathology at the University of Florida, where I am working with Dr. J. Polston, conducting research on tomato geminiviruses.

### Interview with a Visiting Scientist

Renato Bassanezi visited us last month from Piracicaba, Brazil. He attended the University of Sao Paulo (ESALQ), the same university as Juliana, Denise, and Daniela, where he earned his B.Sc. in Agronomy. He stayed on for his M.Sc. in Plant Pathology with a concentration in epidemiology. He worked on a project with common bean and studied the interaction between viral and fungal diseases; focusing on latent period, temperature differences, and infection efficiency. Immediately after completing his M.Sc., Renato began work on his Ph.D. at ESALQ (he says he has been there for 12 years!) He is investigating the relationship between disease severity and photosynthetic efficiency of common bean in Brazil.

Renato visited Dr. Berger's lab for a month to use computer modeling comparing healthy leaf area absorption and duration with the diseased tissue. He is focusing on the differences of diseases of varying severity, ranging from bean rust to angular leaf spot disease and anthracnose. Both Dr. Berger and Renato's advisor are working on a common project in Brazil. While visiting on a recent trip, Dr. Berger stayed at Renato's home and they have become friends, and Dr. Berger invited him to come to Florida. Renato will finish his Ph.D. when he returns to Brazil; he is currently applying for, a job.

Renato enjoys going to the movies, playing volleyball, and riding horses (he has one at home). He also enjoys traveling; this is his third trip abroad during his Ph.D. In addition to Florida, he has visited France and Germany to enhance his understanding of computer modeling of diseases. This is not Renato's first trip to the US, however. He came to Florida about six years ago as a tourist. He also visited the University of Guelph in Canada, and for 3 months, he participated in the Trek America program where he visited many cities along the eastern seaboard, camping along the way. During this brief stay in Gainesville, he visited several art museums, the Ft. Pierce research station, and St. Augustine. He hopes to visit again someday.

We wish him well in finishing his degree and look forward to his next visit to UF.

### Sunshine Fund Donations

This is just a reminder for everyone to please help out with Christmas gifts for

the custodial staff this season. To do so, simply drop your donations into the "Sunshine Fund box" in the front office. If the box is not sitting out, Karen or Gail can help out.

Last year donations were embarrassingly slim. Please remember that our custodians literally clean up after us all year and survive on a lot less money than we do. It really is a joy to see their faces light up when we give them a gift and say "thanks for all you do throughout the year and Merry Christmas from Plant Pathology". If anyone wants to take part in the gift presentation, see either me or Patti Ray-side. It might add a nice touch if they are given out to individuals who have daily interaction throughout the year.

We are presently accepting donations but please try to submit them by December 17th.

Thanks and Merry Christmas,

Jim DeValerio

### Annual Winter Social

The Plant Pathology Annual Winter Social will be held Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, at Lake Wauberg. This is always a wonderful, festive event for everyone in the department and their families. Please bring a dish to share and contact Wayne Jurick ([wmj@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:wmj@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu)) for more information and an RSVP form.

**The PLP News Staff Would Like to Wish You Happy**

## **Holidays and a Wonderful New Year!**

---

**Hey Budding Writers and Folks with  
Questions : We want to hear from you! If  
you would like to join our staff or con-  
tribute an article, contact us!**

**PLP News**

**1453 Fifield Hall  
P.O. Box 110680  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0680**

**Or, you can e-mail us at:  
PLPNEWS@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu**

**News Team Nov./Dec .1999**

Ronald French  
Misty Nielsen

Angela Vincent  
Camilla Yandoc  
Eduardo Carlos  
Juliana Freitas-Astua  
Robert Kemerait

*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not  
necessarily those of the PLPNews Staff.*

---