



Matt Quinn, President
 Bryan Mayo, Vice President
 Heidi Watson, Exec. Secretary/Treas.
 Dugald Kell Jr, Newsletter Editor

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Greetings from our President

Matthew Quinn

Greetings MCTA members,

President's Day has come and gone, and I'm getting ready to go back out and plow some driveways. After a somewhat dry January, February has given us a much more traditional winter here in the Pine Tree State.

January, February and March are usually quiet for even the busiest of tree farmers. The holiday is over, the fields are frozen, and many of us are stuck with idle hands while we wait to get back to work. While a little down time is always good, too much of nothing to do drives me up a wall. Luckily, there are always plenty of things to do at the farm.

The quiet time is a great time to clean. Farmers are nearly akin to hoarders when it comes to saving "useful" things. My predecessor saved what appears to be everything. And even after owning the farm for three years, we still have much to go through. At one point, I found a packing slip from Kelco that was nearly 40 years old. Prices certainly have changed since then!

With January's snow drought, I turned to producing a few cord of firewood. Winter, especially ones with little snow, are great times to get out and take care of blow downs, brush and overgrown cull trees. My plan is to sell the firewood as a little side income. It's important to me to utilize all of the resources at the farm, and a little chainsaw therapy is always good for the soul.

This year, I built a tow behind trail groomer to create activity trails at the farm. I have invited friends and neighbors to utilize them for their enjoyment. This is a throwback to the "Tree Farm Touring Center" created by John Hodges, of the original Hodges' Tree Farm where Quinn's Tree Farm now resides. As children, we would cross-country ski through the tree fields and woods. We had races, and the high school teams used the trails to train. As an adult, I find the quiet to be peaceful and the landscape pristine under the frozen blanket. Offering the trails to friends and neighbors also helps with community building, as people will certainly remember us come Christmas tree time.

Lastly, March is sap season. While the Abies might be the best smelling tree, the Acer is the best tasting. Many of us will be collecting the sugar water and boiling it down over a warm fire as we solve all the world's problems in the sugar shack. Maine Maple Sunday weekend is March 22-23 and is a great time to support other specialty farmers while beginning to awake from our hibernation.

In just a few weeks, it will be April, and we'll be out there planting our trees. Until then, enjoy the quiet time.

Matt



**2025 Officers & Directors
Maine Christmas Tree Association**

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(3rd seat vacant)

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(3rd seat vacant)

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

Heidi Watson

Greetings!

Our Association is growing! We would like to welcome all of our newest members. Currently, our account balance stands at \$60,072.01. I have been busy updating our membership records over the past six weeks and preparing envelopes and membership cards for distribution. It has been encouraging to see so many new members join our organization. Many of them are just starting, and we understand that feeling—we've all been there not too long ago!

The Winter meeting was a tremendous success! Although I couldn't attend personally, I've received many positive reports about the event. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making it great.

Membership cards are being mailed to members who have paid their dues. If you have not yet paid your dues, please do so soon; this newsletter has a membership form for your convenience.

Important Dates:

June 10th - Ornaments for Troops packing party (see below)

September 13th-14th - Fall Meeting in New Brunswick

September 26th - Fryeburg Fair Tree and Wreath Competition drop off.

September 27th-October 5th - Fryeburg Fair

Thank you for your patience as I have navigated taking over this position for the past 9 months. If you have any questions, please reach out.

Respectfully,

Heidi Watson
Executive Secretary/Treasurer

Recording Secretary

Ornaments for Troops!

The VFW ladies now have over
5,000 Ornaments ready for this fall!

We have an ornament packing party each year in June. This year it will be **JUNE 10TH @ 9am**, at our home in Belmont, we have coffee and treats to start then pack boxes and have a potluck at lunch, usually 12 noon.
Call Melba/Gary 207 322-8716 for info.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - January 13th, 2025

Heidi Watson

6:03 PM Call to order - Matt Quinn Roll Call

Present - Matt Quinn (President), Bryan Mayo (Vice President), Heidi Watson (Executive Secretary), Ryan Liberty (Past President), and directors Tom McNeil, Jim Hummer, Calvin Luther, Lowell Freiman and Dugald Kell. Guests: Gary & Melba Fisher, Brandon Watson, and Jennifer Hicks (Administrative Consultant).

Absent: Matt LaCasce

Minutes from the October 14, 2024, Board Meeting were brought up for approval. Passed unanimously.

Secretary's & Treasurer's Reports (Heidi Watson) - We have 125 members with many new memberships. Membership dues are due before the end of January. There are 40 people registered for the winter meeting. We received thank you notes from military members who received a Trees for Troops tree and ornaments. There is also one from the Maine Tourism Association. I am thankful to Joanne and Dugald for helping me when needed.

Maine School Garden Network request for a donation - A motion was made and seconded to donate what we donated last year. Motion passed unanimously.

The MCTA bank balance is \$58,922.43.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports. Motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Consultant's Report (Jenn Hicks) – Jenn is working with the executive team and Dugald on various tasks, from meetings to the website and setting up an email blast system, has worked well for our organization. She is contracted for 10 hours a month and did not utilize all of those hours in 2024.

Matt suggests that we have a bi-weekly newsletter/email.

Tom thanked Jenn and said he appreciated her work. He asked about past members and if she had been able to reach out to them. She replied she did not last year, but it was one of her plans for the coming year. Jenn is curious about how new members hear about us. Also, we surveyed this past year, and 20 people responded. We could survey membership every year to get some data on our progress.

Committee Reports -

Nominating Committee - nothing to report

Meetings Committee - We are looking for a host for the fall meeting. What's the pitch to host a meeting? Ryan mentioned that it is a service to the organization and that most farms enjoy getting their farm in top shape. Bryan suggested a section on the website highlighting past host farms. Also, maybe see if the newspaper will write an article on them for some media coverage.

Budget Committee - We need to get some information from the subcommittees to gather information before we make the budget.

Scholarship Committee - The committee met and there were three applicants. All three were contacted to see if they were taking classes this semester. None of them were, so no money was awarded.

Seed Orchard - See Report Submitted (pg 6).

Marketing - See Report Submitted (pg 7).

Fryeburg Fair - See Report Submitted (pg 4). Suggestion made to put making garland out to bid for the fair.

Ornaments for Troops - On June 10th there will be an ornament packing event at the Fisher's (see notice on pg 2). A local TV news station has been invited to do some filming and to follow up with a televised feature.

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - January 13th, 2025 (continued)

Old Business - None

New Business -

These are goals given by Matt Quinn:

- Establishment of a 501 (c) 3 Organization: This would create a place for donations that are raised for the MCTA scholarship fund and Trees for Troop to be a tax deductible contribution. This would be like the NCTA Christmas Spirit Foundation. It could also help raise funds for education programs. It would require a board of directors, a mission, and submission of an application to the IRS.
- Program for New Growers: This program could either pair farmers with new growers and/or create a series of webinars and classes to provide the basics for new growers to gain skills and knowledge. This will support small and medium farm operations in the state which is MCTA's main component of its membership.
- Legislative Committee: Would like to explore the creation of a legislative committee that would serve as a voice to advocate for policy that will help bolster the industry. This could include things like legislation that would make real trees tax exempt, dedicating more state resources and expertise to help growers and their farms, etc.

A motion to Adjourn was made and seconded. Passed, All in Favor.

Fryeburg Fair Report

Gary & Melba Fisher

The Fair for 2025 will begin with an extended run of 9 days instead of the usual 8 days. This may add extra work for exhibitors, but will also add additional opportunities to the exhibitors, considering the extra day of exposure to the fair attendees.

The Fair runs September 27th through October 5th, which is 9 days from Saturday to Sunday. This means trees and wreaths will have to be dropped at the Christmas tree exhibit area Thursday the 25th, 8am-4pm or Friday 26th, 8am-12:45pm. The judging will begin at 1:00 pm on Friday and PEOPLES CHOICE voting will begin Saturday & Sunday. Entries that place in their respective categories will be announced Monday, September 9th.

Other thoughts were considered as to how to proceed with the process of getting all the entries into the Fair, but due to the extreme traffic during an opening day at the fair it only seemed best to get the entries in before the fair opened.

Also due to getting the premium book changes in early, a different, exhibit entry possibility was put in, but should be ignored as the above method is what we will promote and use in any future publications. Any questions can be addressed to myself at alonghere492@gmail.com.

Melba and I are looking for helpers for the exhibit booth and have schedules and positions for different days. We will need folks to do wreath demos, work the porch, answer questions, sell wreath materials and seedling plugs, which benefits our scholarship program. It is really fun and enjoyable to be at the table and if you would work, there are accommodations at the booth for overnight. And you can see the fair along with taking in the entertainment in the evening. Please give us a call for the details, 207-322-8716.

I am very pleased with the 2024 Agricultural Fair Evaluation Report done by the State, for the 2024 Fryeburg Fair. The Fair received a score of 397.90 out of a possible 400 points. The only items in question were the amount of vehicles on the grounds during the fair, which is going to be addressed, and the trash cans that were overflowing by the afternoon. This problem will be worked on for sure.

Fryeburg Fair (continued)

On another note, many of you that do attend the fair have hopefully noticed in the past that we have roping on the fence at the exhibit, which really helps to set the Christmas spirit. This year we thought maybe we could put out for bid to have 8, 10 foot lengths of roping made. So in the Christmas spirit send me a quote for the 10 lengths, keeping in mind not to be too expensive. Also we need tips for wreath demos, that could be included in the bid, about 10-15 lbs. In years past Jim Corliss had donated it and last year Boiling Spring Christmas Tree Farm provided it. This is also a good use of butt pruning brush for the roping, it doesn't have to be fancy just green.

Thank you,

Gary Fisher, Superintendent



AGCOM (Agricultural Council of Maine)

Gary Fisher

Monthly report to MCTA Jan. 28, 2025

AGCOM Annual Meeting called to order 9:00 am. Annual meeting; Secretary's report, review of 2024, approved. Treasurer's report; reviewed, approved. Nominating Committee; new slate of officers for 2025 presented/approved. The annual meeting is held in January each year to review previous years actions and to nominate the new slate of officers for year 2025. Meeting Adjourned 9:52

Regular Monthly Meeting called to order 9:52. Three bond issues are coming that may affect AG, but no LD#'s as of yet. AGCOM will change the monthly meeting from Tuesday to Wednesday due to Legislature changes. This gives AGCOM better attendance at the state house. There was some discussion on possible tariffs, but too early to report on. Legislative reports given, not much AG related yet. Commodities group reports given, some concerns as to the possible actions of the new administration.

I reported for MCTA that 300 Trees For Troops and Ornaments were sent by FedEx to the 910th Airlift Wing in Youngstown, OH; to West Point, NY; to Fort Gregg-Adams, VA; and NSB, New London, CT. The trees were donated by many growers, by other donations collected at Fryeburg Fair and from other private donations. Ornaments this year were 5,000+ thanks to the ladies at the VFW.

I reported that wholesale tree sales were good and choose and cut growers said about the same. Some choose and cut farms did have some pre-cuts left but it seemed to be farms staying open later than others. The AG show meeting did bring some new members/growers and that is excellent for the Christmas tree association.

Anyone interested in attending the AGCOM MEETINGS are welcome to come and see what AGCOM does in the interest of agriculture. Also any members of MCTA that have issues or thoughts to present to the council can do so in person or pass it on to myself and I will present it.

Meeting Adjourned 11:30

Gary Fisher, AGCOM REP.
alonghere492@gmail.com

Seed Orchard Committee Report - January 2025

Calvin Luther

2023 Cone Collection Cleaned Seed Results:

Seed Cleaning at Todd's house 10/10/23

Clone#	Weight (lbs.oz)		Clone#	Weight (lbs.oz)		Clone#	Weight (lbs.oz)
1	5.2		14	0.13		45	2.0
3	15.8		15	0.12		47	0.7
4	38.10		20	0.14		54	1.8
11	14.5		39	8.3			
Total Weight 88 lbs 2 oz							

All but 20 lbs of clone 4 were sent to Downey Nursery, Quebec in late Nov. 2023 by Todd. Todd kept 10 lbs of 4 and Calvin has 10 lbs of 4 all kept in a freezer, to spread the risk of spoilage.

Ashland Seed Orchard: Steve Higgins interviewed 1/13/25 by C.Luther

No visit in 2024. Last visit in 2023. Several blowdown trees are reported to be blocking the road into the seed orchard across the Chase's land. Nancy (daughter) inherited the land and has concerns about her liability when we access the property. Steve reported the trees in the orchard were in good shape the last time he saw them in 2023.

Currently, we are treating Ashland SO as a backup to Norridgewock should the latter not provide sufficient seed for us at our current consumption rates. Also, in June 2022 Steve hosted a visit from Maine Forest Service Pathologist Arron Bergdahl and Entomologist Mike Parisio. Their report stated "The overall incidence and severity of disease and insect damage was low in the plantation." Needle cast and fir-broom rust (witches broom) were present in low amounts, common to all fir plantations.

Norridgewock Seed Orchard:

We did not mow this seed orchard in 2024. Seed collection is reported above. Len Price and C. Luther visited the seed orchard in September 2024 with Nova Scotia grower Matt Wright to show our orchard to him. The trees were in good condition. It was noted that there seemed to be lots of male pollen flower buds formed on the lower branches so perhaps there will be another cone crop in 2025? We will have to investigate later this year.

Huff Hill, Hartland:

The 36 potted grafted transplants are at Len Price's farm over winter, to be planted out in the spring 2025. This is what we have left of 70 grafting attempts, due to poor root stock preparation on our part. So we have prepared another 40-50 potted root stock which are overwintering at Lens (40) and Cals (10) and we hope they will be of sufficient size to be used in another grafting attempt in 2025 by Len.

The field was laid out for planting in rows 25 feet apart, and tree spots with ribboned stakes 20 feet apart in the rows. We have 8 rows with 9 trees per row for this orchard. The tree planting spots were herbicided on August 21, 2024 by Ron Lemin, commercial pesticide applicator, with a mixture of glyphosate and simazine. Calvin visited it three weeks later and confirmed a good kill in a 4 foot square area for each planting site. Cost was \$250. Mowing was performed the last week of September by Matt Quinn. Cost was \$140.

Seed Orchard Committee Report - January 2025 (continued)

We intend to plant the 36 grafted trees in the orchard this spring. We also intend to attempt to graft the additional prepared planting stock in an attempt to get the 70 grafted plants we originally planned for, 10 trees for each of the superior needle retention clones from our best trees in the seed orchard, as previously determined by progeny ranking studies done by our members.

Regards,

Calvin Luther
Seed Orchard Committee

Marketing Committee

Ryan Liberty

- Fryeburg Fair – I'll be huddling up with Gary and Melba Fisher in the coming months to brainstorm ways that we can continue to leverage our presence at the fair to help enhance Christmas tree industry awareness.
- Blaine House Christmas Trees – The Blaine House has committed to accept our trees and wreaths once again in 2025.
- Brand update – We'll continue to survey memberships on their thoughts regarding our current image, and whether we should consider a brand refresh.
- "Featured Farmer" in future newsletters – The goal is to hi-light a new farmer in each newsletter.
- "Legacy Member" series – Matt will soon be presenting our latest "Legacy Member", Jim Corliss.
- Establish an MCTA archive – Begin to collect and sort through whatever relevant MCTA material that I can find.

NECTRA (Northeastern Christmas Tree Research Alliance)

Ryan Liberty

The purpose of the Northeastern Christmas Tree Research Alliance is to coordinate and facilitate research for the improvement of Christmas Tree and Greenery production for industry members, which includes Christmas tree growers, greenery producers and suppliers to growers.

These items were discussed on the January 14, 2025 meeting:

- Quebec led research initiative on diseases, especially those that are soil based - Philippe Tanguay (and possibly Dominique Choquette)
- Challenges / study directions from Maine - Brett Johnson, Cooperative Extension, Maine
- Update on Needle Abscission Prevention – a very timely topic after 2024 shed issues! - Rich Cowles, Connecticut Ag Station
- Challenges facing growers – a Quebec perspective - Larry Downey
- Gary Chastagner endowment letter



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