



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTMAS TREE GROWERS ASSOCIATION HOSTS SUMMER MEETING

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The 2009 PCTGA Summer Meeting was held July 30 – August 1, 2009, in Bloomsburg at Ponderosa Trees & Wreaths and Quaker State Plantations. Hosts – the Swiderski and Zelazny families and staff – were wonderfully gracious and hospitable during the group's visit.

Thursday evening started at the Ponderosa pavilion with an old-fashioned corn roast dinner. During the night, attendees sat under the open air structure, taking in the enjoyable evening air while visiting with 20 vendors from near and far, including one vendor who travelled from as far as California. There was the freshly tapped local Blue Birch Beer and some PCTGA members brought homemade brews that encouraged chatting and socializing long in to the night.

Friday morning started bright and early back at Ponderosa's with the group splitting into two; one headed on wagons out into the field to learn from the leader of the Swiderski family, Walter, and son, Mike, about the workings of the Elysburg wholesale and retail operation. While learning about the multi-functional enterprise, a stop at the wreath-making barn was included, where thousands of wreaths are produced each season. Then, it was off to the retail shop, where daughter Donna showed some of her tips and tidbits as to how they add sparkle to the naturally beautiful greenery when decorating wreaths. Below the retail shop stands the restaurant/bakery/deli that locals frequent for breakfast, lunch and dinner year long.

When not taking in the Ponderosa atmosphere, attendees furthered their education by learning from Jay Bagley and Kimberlee Helbley from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) about common insects and diseases of Christmas trees in Pennsylvania. The pair created an enjoyable and attention-grabbing banter for absorbing the information being presented. Growers were thrust forward in their

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thirst for knowledge by Norman Conrad from the Union County Penn State Cooperative Extension office when he spoke about the need to reduce spray drift. He concluded his presentation with a demonstration showing the size of droplets being disbursed by sprayers, as well as illustrating the distance that is being sprayed, using color changing moisture sensitive paper strips.

The day concluded with dinner, a make-your-own ice cream sundae dessert buffet and PCTGA president Robin Strathmeyer taking the lead in guiding the group through the annual business meeting in the Pondera banquet hall. Drew Yenser and Jay Bustard shared a verbal overview and visual peek at their farms, which will be visited during the 2010 Summer Meeting.

Saturday morning offered a change in scenery by moving participants a few miles down the road to Quaker State Plantations. Manager Mark Zelazny shared how he keeps the fields in tip top shape while staying on top of the farms that are in Columbia and the bordering Montour counties.

The 2009 Summer Meeting has passed us by, but the memories made talking with growers that are new—as well as those more seasoned with time—all the while partaking in the educational buffet laid out by the farms and speakers, will not soon be erased.

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*The **Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers**, with approximately 300 member farms, works to promote and develop a community of interest among growers of Christmas trees in Pennsylvania and adjoining states, as well as to raise public awareness about Christmas trees. To find a Christmas tree grower near you, visit our Website at www.christmastrees.org.*

Photos available upon request.