In This Issue:

- Upcoming Events
- Roan Mountain Seedling Sale
- Pest Issues
- County Farmland Preservation
- Spring Fertility Tips
- Risk Management for Tree Growers
- Phytophthora Problems

Upcoming Events

- **Thursday, April 20 ~ 3:00 p.m.**
  Location TBA—Call 372-5597
  “Fraser Fir Scouting Workshop”

- **Tuesday, May 9 ~ 5:30 p.m.**
  Sparta United Methodist Church
  “Dinner and Conservation Easements Program”
  RSVP by May 1st—372-5597

- **Friday, June 23 ~ 9:00 a.m.**
  Hudler Tree Farm, Beaver Creek Road,
  West Jefferson, NC
  “Hispanic Christmas Tree Worker Farm Safety Day

The U.S. Forest Service will again be issuing pulling permits for Fraser Fir wildlings on Roan Mountain. The pulling dates for 2006 are April 28, 29 and May 1. Pulling hours are 7:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. with no check-in after 3:00 p.m. The sale area remains the same as last year.

The DEADLINE for placing orders will be Tuesday, April 4th at 12:00 noon.

The cost of seedlings remain at $115.00 per thousand. Payment can be made at the Extension Office Please make your check payable to “Cooperative Extension Fund” along with name address, telephone, and the number of seedlings being purchased.
**Pest Issues**

**BWA:** Eggs have shown up in fields in February, much earlier than normal. The late March cold may delay egg hatch into crawlers, usually occurring within a month. Complete scouting and treatment preferably to occur before beneficial insects emerge. Refer to CTN-020.

**BTA:** Following the warm period of early March, twig aphid activity could be earlier this year. The late March cold may prevent those aphids from developing into stem mothers that produce live aphids. Eggs not hatching earlier are still present, and normal pre-bud break April scouting for BTA should be planned. Local Extension Offices should have regional reports of dates for final egg hatch to plan treatment on near market trees. Refer to CTN-019.

**SSM:** Early spider mite activity was a concern with the early warm and very dry weather. Subsequent cold and rain will limit development of immature mites that may have hatched. During the April scouting, look for eggs that could hint at future mites. Refer to CTN-029.

**HRM:** Hemlock Rust Mite is a Spring time pest that can increase in numbers quickly with moderate, dry weather. Now is the time to be scouting for Rust Mites. If treatment thresholds are found, use a product for control of both SSM and HRM. Watch for bronzing needle color, or needle drop with heavy infestation. Refer to CTN-34.

To obtain more specific information on pest life cycles, scouting, threshold levels, and control practices, you will find the Christmas Tree Notes mentioned above in the literature display outside my office door. Available as well is a list of insecticides labeled for Fraser Fir and Scouting Protocols for the various pests.

**County Voluntary Farmland Preservation**

This voluntary and revocable program is intended to promote farm conservation and serve notice to neighbors that farming activities regularly occur on the enrolled farm. It also serves to recognize the importance of agriculture to the economy and social fabric of the county.

Of the currently enrolled 5,390 acres in the county, 3,262 acres are in the agriculture category; 1,997 are in the forestry category; and 131 acres are in the horticulture category.

Some Christmas tree acres may be enrolled under ag or forestry. Recall that for Present Use Property Tax Valuation, Christmas trees are listed under the horticultural category. We currently have five full time tree growers enrolled, and three part-time growers enrolled. If your farm is currently under Present Use Valuation, it automatically qualifies for Voluntary Farmland Preservation enrollment. Withdraw from VFP can occur at any time through written notice to the Advisory Board. Applications are available at the Alleghany Extension Center.
Fraser Fir target pH is 5.5 as determined by a lab soil test report.

- Limit one time top dressing of lime to under 1-1/2 tons per acre.

- Long term dolomitic lime use may build excess magnesium to detriment of calcium.

- Consider calcitic lime for problem of low pH and low calcium.

- Gypsum is good soluble source of calcium, doesn't change pH.

- Factor in soil report CEC to determine gypsum rates.

- Allow 4-6 weeks between lime/gypsum application and granular fertilizer top dressing.

- N,K,S,B leach readily in soil with heavy precipitation.

- Change from 18-46-0 when soil tests show K below Fraser Fir index of 75-80.

- Tissue samples yield best information during tree dormancy.

- Don't get any dirt on diagnostic tissue samples, separate trip form collecting soil samples.

- Review target nutrient indices and deficiency symptoms for Fraser Fir.

(Available at Extension Office).

Risk, defined most simply as the possibility of suffering harm or loss, is part of everyday life, and risk is certainly a part of Christmas tree production. While most Christmas tree growers believe the business to be relatively risky, many growers lack a complete understanding of risk and risk management principles.

**Five Categories of Risk**

Beyond basic risk and risk management principles there are five commonly recognized categories of agricultural risk:

1. Production risk
2. Marketing risk
3. Financial risk
4. Human resource risk
5. Legal risk

An understanding of these risk categories is fundamental for growers seeking to successfully manage risk.

(over)
Steps to Risk Management

Risk Identification

The process for managing risk is really very straightforward. First you need to identify and classify the risks you face. There is no correct way to do this, but it seems easier if they are classified along the lines of what you do.

■ Production Risk:

The major sources of production risks are weather, pests, diseases, and the interaction of technology with other farm and management characteristics, genetics, machinery efficiency, and the quality of inputs.

■ Marketing Risk:

Marketing is that part of your business that transforms production activities into financial success. Marketing risk is any marketing related activity or event that is uncertain leading to the variability and unpredictability of prices that farmers both receive for their products, and pay for production inputs.

■ Financial Risk:

Financial risk covers those risks that threaten the financial health of the farm business and has three basic components:

1. The cost and availability of debit capital
2. The ability to meet cash flow needs in a timely manner
3. The ability to maintain and grow equity.

Cash flows are especially important because of the variety of ongoing farm obligations, such as cash input costs, cash lease payments, tax payments, debt repayment, and family living expenses.

■ Human Resource Risk: (Current Major Risk ~ Government Policy)

Human resources are both a source of risk and an important part of the strategy for dealing with risk. At the core of dealing with that risk, and that potential, is the ability to manage people. Human resource calamities can hamper even the most carefully made and appropriate risk management decisions. Those calamities include divorce, chronic illness, and accidental death.

■ Legal Risk:

Legal issues cut across other risk areas. Production activities involving the use of pesticides have legal implications if appropriate safety precautions are not taken. Marketing of agricultural products involves contract law. Human resource issues associated with agriculture also have legal implications, ranging from employer/employee rules and regulations, to inheritance laws.

NOTE: In future newsletters we will be discussing risk management strategies. Please let me know of specific topics / questions to cover.
Every one of you is dealing with questions about the nightmare of Phytophthora root rot. How will you replace lost income, lost production? Given “normal” weather patterns do you risk replanting of good sites? Letting good sites sit idle for some period? Do you have potential new sites to evaluate for risk? Do you consider other species on infected sites? Can fungicides help? Extension hosted a seminar on February 1, at which Drs. Jill Sidebottom, Kelly Ivors, and John Frampton presented information on Phytophthora disease management. Below is a review of some facts covered in that session.

1. The “triangle components” are: disease - host - environment. Soil saturation provides the optimum environment for disease to infect host. Sparta 2004 rainfall saw 10.3 inches of rain in June; 19.7 inches of rain in September; and almost 6 inches in early December flooding. 2005 records showed 13.1 inches in March to April; 14.6 inches in July to August, followed by almost three months of drought.

2. Phytophthora zoospores swim in water, and chlamydospores can live in soil without host for a very long time (20 yrs). Sporangium, formed on host roots, release many zoospores when soils become near saturated.

3. In addition to water movement, infected soil movement infects clean fields. Maintain ground cover? Quarantine infected areas during wet conditions - work them last, practice sanitation of equipment and footwear or use disposable booties.

4. Evaluate slope shape and position, divert surface water from trees when possible.

5. Evaluate soil texture, permeability, impervious subsoil or rock, topsoil depth.

6. Canaan Fir is adapted to wetter areas and has better rooting potential, but is still susceptible to infection/mortality.

7. Momi is most resistant fir, showing potential as grafting rootstock for Fraser Fir. Cost?

8. Subdue (mefenoxam) fungicide used to control spread may be cost justified in some situations. Example: Market trees, treatment cost of $675 per acre?

9. For nursery beds, consider methyl bromide fumigation, significant period of frozen soil (?), Subdue from time of planting, well water irrigation, well-drained raised beds.

10. Wood chip mulches release cellulase, which reduces Phytophthora spore formation.

11. The fungus becomes active above 54 degrees; disease lab tests may give false negatives before soil warms up, and lab needs disease specimen with living tissue.
Sincerely,

[Signature]

David B. Isner
Extension Agent
Agriculture