

A NEW REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GROWERS IS ORGANIZED

Last September the final plans for the organization of a new regional association of Christmas tree growers were perfected. This new association is named Mid-America Christmas Trees.

Four growers from the states of Missouri, Illinois and Indiana had previously held several meetings to discuss such an organization. The September meeting held in Effingham, Illinois was attended by seventeen "Charter Members" from these three states and devoted to perfecting final plans for the new association. Attending were: Mr. & Mrs. Mike Gwinner, LeRoy Rood and Joseph Honich from Missouri; from Illinois, Frank Evans, Leo Delhaute, Glen Massie, Ron Vanek and Lowell Miller; from Indiana, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Graves, Mr. and Mrs. Wyman Hochstetler, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowers, don Goodwin, and Virgil and Joe Armstrong.

Why this new organization? It has become increasingly clear that entirely too many growers do not now have access to the advantages of affiliation with any organization broader than that in their own state. Considerably less than one-fifth of those belonging to state growers' associations now belong to any interstate or national organization. The organizers of Mid-America Christmas Trees believe that all growers should have available these contacts with outside growers. Most of these unorganized growers are new or smaller ones, the very ones most in need of these broader contacts.

Why Mid-America? Again the organizers say that they plan to start on a regional basis with growers from states with similar interests and problems. Mid-America is primarily Scotch pine country and it is helpful to get together with a broad group of growers who are concentrating upon the growing of Scotch pine Christmas trees.

Mid-America Christmas Trees is planned as a non-profit association of growers, for growers, and operated by growers. It is planned to operate the association with interested volunteers

in order to keep the dues low and within the financial reach of even the smallest grower who has yet to realize any income from the sale of trees. Initial dues have been set at \$15.00 per year for a family membership.

Interim officers elected at the September meeting consist of an interim Executive Committee composed of Mike Gwinner of Missouri, as Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, Frank Evans of Illinois and Morris Graves of Indiana as Vice Chairman. When questioned about this rather unusual combination of Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, Gwinner explained that this would avoid the necessity of transferring the small bank account, currently in Hermann, Mo. The other Charter Members present in September comprise an interim Board of Directors. All of these will serve until a planned general meeting next summer, when a formal organization plan and election of permanent officers can take place.

We asked Gwinner about the plans for this new organization. "We see a need for a broader organization of growers," he said. "The various state associations are doing an excellent job of educating member growers to the problems in their states and their solutions. Several states have experimented with joint meetings with neighboring states and have found them to be very beneficial. The major purpose of Mid-America will be to foster interstate activities and interchanges on a planned, continuous basis.

The major activity will be an annual summer gathering of the members. This will be held at a central location which is convenient and within a one day drive of most members. Arrangements have already been made for the '82 meeting to be held on Friday and Saturday, June 11 and 12 at the Holiday Inn in Decatur, Illinois.

"The program for this '82 meeting is now being planned, but we are thinking of sessions of such subjects as making and marketing decorative items; insect and disease problems; and marketing, especially by Choose &

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Cutters. As this is a regional meeting, concentrating upon Scotch pine production, such subjects can be aimed directly at the members' problems, with no necessity for attempting to cover the problems of the entire country. We also plan special sessions for new and beginning growers and for the special activities of the women, particularly as they affect decorative by-products. We think these will be worthwhile meetings."

We asked Gwinner, "You mentioned a business session at this summer meeting. These are customary with state association, but aren't they unusual for a regional meeting?" He replied, "Yes, perhaps they are unusual. Some broad organizations hold 'rap sessions' where members have an opportunity to raise questions.

But as Mid-America is planned as an association of, by and for growers, we think the member growers should have the opportunity to govern their own organization. At this business session they will do just that. They will decide what kind of organization they desire, what its objective and purposes will be, and how they want it run. They will vote upon and adopt their own constitution and by-laws, and elect permanent officers. It will be their association and they will run it."

The Board of Directors has reached some decisions as to membership policies. It was decided that all active grower memberships shall be family memberships as they expect the distaff side to also be active in the organization. Decisions as to corporate members, suppliers, etc. will be recommended by the Committee drafting the Constitution and By-Laws. Professional persons, not active growers, rendering exceptional services to the Association will be included as Honorary Members. Initial dues were set at \$15.00 per year, with the growers joining in 1981 to be paid through 1982. All members who sign up before the end of the 1982 summer meeting will be classed as Charter Members.

Anyone wishing to join Mid-America Christmas Trees may do so by sending the dues of \$15.00 to Mike Gwinner, Secretary at Route 3, Box 144, Hermann, Mo. 65041. Current members will be kept informed of new developments.