

Christmas Tree Grades Revised

A revision of U.S. grade standards for Christmas trees announced recently by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) adds "well-shaped" as a requirement for two grades, U.S. No. 1 or Choice and U.S. No. 2 or Standard.

According to USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) the revision effective April 1 was undertaken at the request of the National Christmas Tree Growers Association which believed a change would encourage wider use of the standards by the industry. Christmas tree standards are used in wholesale marketing of trees. Use of the standards is voluntary.

AMS officials said that the proposal to revise the Christmas tree grade standards included the intention to delete the U.S. Premium Grade, leaving U.S. No. 1 or Choice as the top grade for Christmas trees (USDA press release 2347-72). However, as a result of comments received, it has been decided to retain the U.S. Premium grade. Comments from interested persons also prompted the addition of two species, Fraser fir and Virginia pine to the types of trees covered by the standards.

"Well-shaped," the new requirement for U.S. No. 1 and U.S. No. 2 grades, is defined as meaning that branches of a tree form a circular outline tapering

USDA Updated Market News Brochure

A revised and expanded edition of a folder describing the Federal-State market news

service for agricultural commodities has just been released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

The brochure is aimed at persons involved in the Nation's agriculture industry, from farmer through retailer, needing accurate, up-to-the-minute data on the supply, demand, prices, and movement of agricultural products.

For the first time, the brochure includes a nationwide directory of automatic telephone answering devices—a service where the caller need only dial a number to receive instantaneous market news. It also describes how the market news service operates, how market information is collected, and how

users, especially potential users, can get detailed information on market news. Market news, a public service offered since 1915, is operated through cooperative agreements between USDA and 43 State departments of agriculture. AMS, the agency administering the program at the Federal level, reports trained market reporters are now operating in 200 field offices around the country. For a quick exchange of information, they are linked by a teletypewriter network stretching 23,500 miles. "The Federal-State Market News Service" (Marketing Bulletin No. 40), is available free from the Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

Other changes in the grade standards include:

- Provision for a color code system for tagging trees according to height
- A requirement that "handle" length of all trees be a minimum of six inches, unless otherwise specified
- Maximum length of the handle will be restricted to 1 1/4 inches per foot of tree height unless otherwise specified
- The former standards allowed the tree handle to be approximately one inch to each foot of tree height
- Size of trees will be expressed in both 1-foot and 1/2-foot increments, instead of increments of only 1-foot
- Normal taper percent ranges for fir and spruce trees will be 40 to 90 percent instead of 40 to 70 percent
- Taper percentage is the relationship of the width of the tree to its height
- The presence of moss and lichen growth is no longer considered as a damage factor or as an impediment to the requirement that a tree be clean
- The description "well-trimmed" is replaced with "butt-trimmed," a term that is more familiar to members of the industry

The revised standards were scheduled to appear in the Feb. 27 Federal Register. Copies of the standards may be obtained from the Fruit and Vegetable Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

Notorious Leader
One of the most notorious leaders during the American Civil War was William Quantrill. Quantrill led 450 Confederate irregulars against Lawrence, Kan., in 1863 and killed more than 150 men, women and children. In May, 1865, aged 27, he was fatally wounded during a raid in Kentucky.

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Grasses

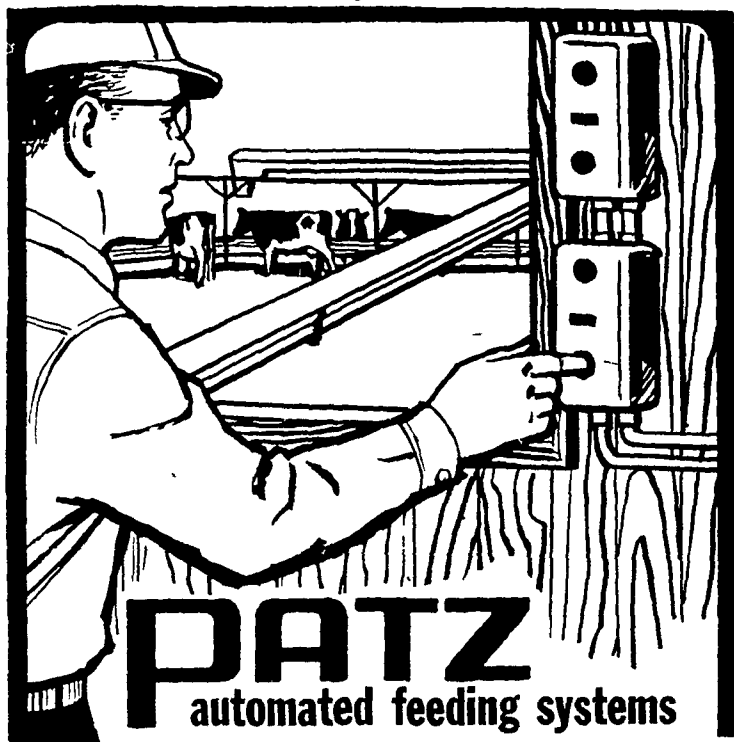
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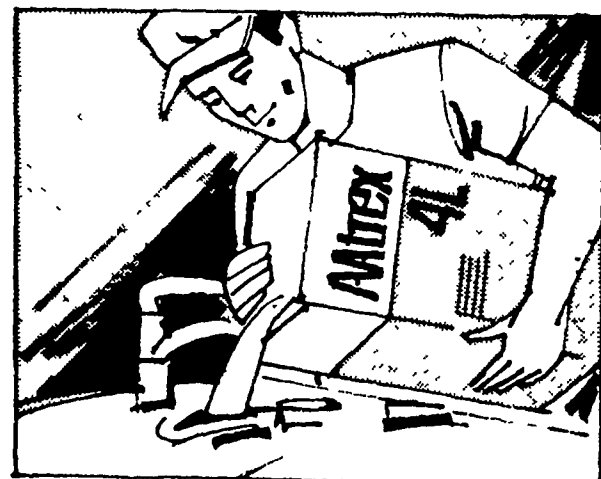
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