



Real Christmas Tree Board
PO Box 77
Howell, MI 48844

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

RCTB 2025 Promotion Highlights

◆ *The Real Christmas Tree Board's 2025 marketing strategies aligned around three pillars:*

- Regaining its foothold as the top media authority and reinforcing messaging that assured consumers real Christmas trees were affordable and plentiful.
- Motivating consumers to purchase real Christmas trees with engaging and emotional storytelling
- Engaging with the industry by providing robust resources and a steady stream of content

As a result of these coordinated efforts, RCTB exceeded expectations on several key performance indicators during a season in which media was heavily focused on tariffs, trade policy and broader economic uncertainty.



Promotion Drives Visibility & Engagement

#1 RESOURCE FOR MEDIA

RCTB regained its top-tier footing in the media as the number one referenced entity with targeted outlets.

RCTB provided a steady stream of proactive press releases and shared relevant and credible information with the media that was fueled by important data points from RCTB grower and consumer surveys.

And RCTB's updated newsroom provided media members with a robust selection of resources and assets and utilized Google SEM to drive traffic to the newsroom.

84% of growers

say they anticipate no increase in wholesale prices this year, including those who may lower prices.

— RCTB 2025 Briefing & Media Guide

This resulted in a consistent drumbeat of positive and encouraging stories about real Christmas trees and by far, the largest number of impressions that our campaign has received to date.

Consumers were most likely to recall news stories about the price (41%) of real Christmas trees and the stories played an influential role in their purchasing decision.

RCTB updated its newsroom to provide media members with a robust selection of resources and assets and utilized Google SEM to drive traffic to the newsroom.

These efforts were aided by RCTB's name change — which has reduced media confusion — and a “know your sources” section in RCTB's annual *Briefing and Media Guide* that differentiated RCTB and the National Christmas Tree Association from the American Christmas Tree Association, noting ACTA does not represent real Christmas tree growers.

“It's really been a difficult year for our members,” Jami Warner, executive director of the **American Christmas Tree Association**, which represents artificial tree manufacturers and retailers. “This is a very happy industry, and this has not been a happy year.”

— The Banner

At a minimum, a \$500 artificial tree will double in price to more than \$1,000, according to Jami Warner, executive director of the **American Christmas Tree Association**, a trade group representing members of the artificial tree industry.

— The Observer

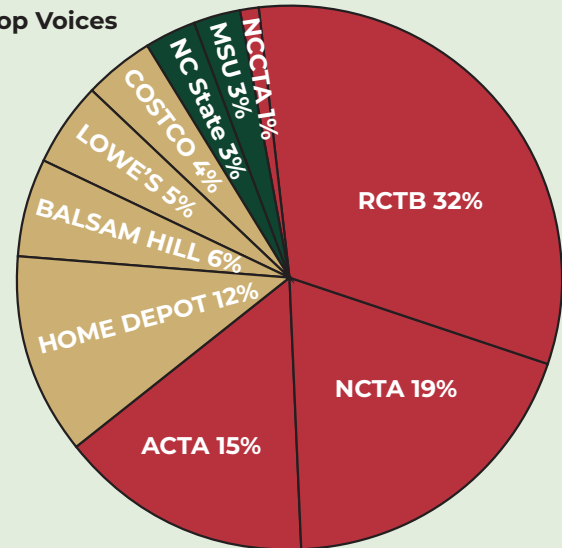
The collage includes the following articles:

- The New York Times:** "Getting a real Christmas tree this year? How to choose and care for it"
- TODAY:** "IS NOW THE TIME TO BUY YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE?"
- GMA abc NEWS:** "Christmas tree pricing: Experts say this may be the year to buy a real tree"
- Southern Living:** "Christmas Tree Prices Could Change This Year — Here's What Growers Are Saying"
- NBC NEWS:** "CHRISTMAS TREE FORECAST" (featuring Marsha Gray, Exec. Dir. Real Christmas Tree Board)
- Better Homes & Gardens:** "When Is It Too Early to Put Up a Fresh-Cut Christmas Tree? An Expert Weighs In"
- USA TODAY:** "Is it Better to Have a Real or Artificial Christmas Tree in 2025?"

WHY THIS MATTERS. By securing its role as the top, trusted resource on Christmas trees, RCTB ensures data-driven messaging reaches consumers through targeted media channels — garnering the most impact for the least spend.

Target Outlet Share of Voice

Top Voices



■ Associations ■ Retailers ■ Education & Research

UNIFIED MESSAGING

To amplify real Christmas tree messaging, RCTB provided consistent and credible resources and talking points to media and growers.

Media Guide: Debunking myths and sharing facts

Distributed to media members, RCTB's media guide provided consistent talking points that helped ensure accurate media coverage, spoke to consumer interests while debunking common myths, highlighted the seasonal outlook and offered a tree variety primer.

WHY THIS MATTERS. By sharing unified messaging with the media, influencers and growers, RCTB empowers our partners with the ability to address top consumer concerns, debunk common misconceptions that can be a barrier to purchasing a real tree, and showcase messaging that — according to RCTB data — most resonates with targeted consumers. Together, this messaging can impact consumer purchasing decisions and drive sales.

In addition, the guide provided contact information for RCTB spokespeople and links to easily accessible images, video and quotes from five real Christmas tree growers located across the U.S. that media could “plug-and-play” into their stories.



RCTB's partnerships with trusted social media influencers are an effective means of engaging with consumers and sharing content that resonates with target audiences. Influencers' posts resulted in 8.1 million impressions as compared to 6.5 million in 2024. Ultimately, social media platforms garnered 23.3 million paid impressions across TikTok, Reddit and Meta

Empowering growers

According to the *RCTB 2025 Post-season Survey*, family and joy are the strongest emotional drivers of purchase, and family and friends are considered the most trusted resource when choosing a tree (51%) followed by Christmas tree growers (38%). This aligns with RCTB's strategy to provide growers with unified messaging and an expanded library of marketing assets they can use at their retail site and on their social media platforms. RCTB also provided growers with media guidelines and hosted an Intentional Communications Webinar to help them capitalize on the trust consumers place in them.

66% of those who saw the news about not raising prices claimed it made them more likely to consider a real Christmas tree.

— RCTB Post Campaign Survey

Addressing tariff and pricing concerns

The most impactful message this year revolved around pricing — specifically data from RCTB's wholesale grower survey indicating 84% of real Christmas tree growers surveyed did not intend to increase wholesale prices. This, coupled with a “tariff exempt” callout regarding Canadian-produced trees in RCTB's *Briefing and Media Guide*, dominated messaging in 25 targeted media placements.

ABOUT MESSAGE HOW TO DELIVER

WHAT ARE MESSAGES
Messages are not everything you could say. They are only those people to remember and repeat.

HOW TO USE THEM
Use Your Own Words
State Your Conclusion First, Then Support
Don't Be Afraid to Repeat Yourself
Make It Personal
Never Say “No Comment,” Lie, or Mislead
Prepare and Practice

— RCTB Resources & Infographic Guides and Media Interview Guides

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

Consumers show an increasing interest in knowing who is growing their trees, how they are grown and what the impacts of harvesting trees play on the environment. Further, they want to make informed purchases when looking for a real Christmas tree and indulge in the joy of the experience.

Engaging with consumers — whether at a retail site or virtually — is critical to their purchasing decisions.

To that end, RCTB boosted consumer engagement efforts across a variety of platforms.

- Creating a new digital Buyers Guide
- Boosting its timely and on-trend social media posts
- Hosting a consumer photo sweepstakes
- Securing digital ads on platforms popular with targeted consumers
- Partnering with social media influencers who have a talent for authentic storytelling
- Hosting virtual farm tours for students
- Showcasing the online Retail Locator

IDENTIFYING FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Each year, RCTB collects data critical to informing its marketing direction for the next season. Insights from the RCTB 2025 Post-Season Consumer Survey indicate that although media coverage about the stability of real Christmas tree pricing had the most positive impact on real tree consideration, perceived cost remains a barrier to final purchasing decisions. A majority (56%) of those surveyed indicated they paid less for their real tree than they expected — thus addressing this gap between perception and reality provides RCTB with an opportunity for the 2026 season.

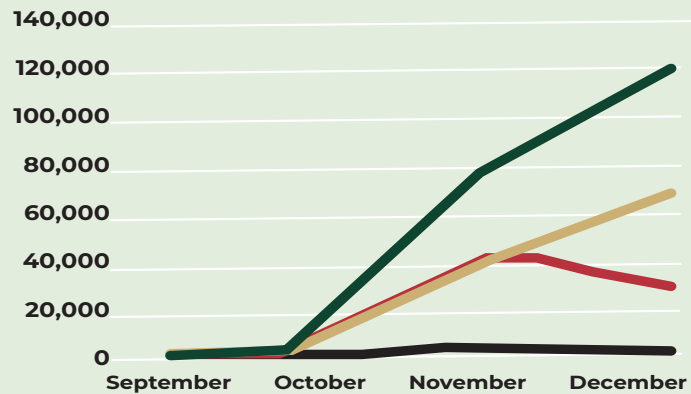
Further, data indicates that our target audience (parents with kids ages 4-17) were more likely to plan and actually purchase a real tree, while respondents ages 21-28 were most likely to have an artificial tree. Their reasons? They felt artificial trees better fit their budget — identifying an opportunity to more directly target this audience with messaging about pricing.

WHY THIS MATTERS. RCTB survey data indicates family and friends are the top trusted resource for real Christmas tree information followed closely by our growers. By authentically engaging with consumers and providing them with relevant information to make an informed purchase decision, RCTB builds a bench of brand ambassadors who can share RCTB messaging with family and friends. By providing growers with easy-to-use, effective messaging and assets, they too can serve as brand ambassadors — thereby increasing the likelihood of a real Christmas tree purchase.

RCTB.com Retail Locator

Year-Over-Year Sessions (+68%)

Total sessions regardless of source



RCTB's Online Retail Locator secured a 68% increase in visits this season — helping consumers easily locate real Christmas tree retailers nearby.

We had a great season!

- More consumers heard about real Christmas trees this year with a **12-percentage point increase** from 2024.
- **Purchase intent increased by 8%** after exposure to RCTB messages.
- RCTB's partnership with trusted social media influencers resulted in **8.1 million impressions as compared to 6.5 million in 2024**.
- Social media platforms garnered **23.3 million paid impressions** across TikTok, Reddit and Meta.

21.5K
RCTB.com
Newsroom sessions

1.4K+
total media placements
= our messages seen
billions of times

25
top-tier target
media placements

346.5K
total link clicks to
RCTB.com from RCTB ads

198.9K
RCTB.com
Retail Locator sessions

23.3M
digital views on
RCTB branded content

Research - Optimizing Production

RCTB-funded research is also a critical part of our mission — driving advances in our industry that improve customer satisfaction and enhance the productivity and sustainability of our growers.

RCTB invested more than \$200,000 in eight projects for 2024-25 which are designed to address challenges faced by growers across the U.S., including:

To address the frequency of Phytophthora root rot and the increase in mortality from PRR due to changing precipitation patterns and shifts in the Phytophthora species in the PNW, Washington State University **conducted field trials infested with isolates of four Phytophthora species to assess fungicides with different modes of action.** The study will provide critical data on the efficacy and optimal timing of fungicide treatments for managing PRR in Christmas tree plantations.

Research conducted by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in collaboration with the balsam fir breeding program in Nova Scotia **sought to find an inexpensive and operationally plausible means of manipulating ethylene production to minimize needle loss in Christmas trees.** Researchers investigated the effectiveness of pre-harvest foliar chemical applications and evaluated compounds already known to block ethylene biosynthesis or plant tissue response to ethylene.

To **address the significant costs associated with copious cone production, researchers evaluated Fraser fir progeny** at the Michigan State University Reduced Coning Seed Orchard. Genetic selection remains the best long-term solution for growers, and the continued examination of this progeny will be critical in identifying viable species.

Mortality of seedlings and transplants constitute a direct loss for growers and result in additional replant costs. Researchers at Michigan State University **established field plots to investigate two means of improving survival rates** — seedling quality and cultural treatments conducted at planting. Data will track survival and growth of seedlings, as well as the effectiveness of treatments such as mulch, compost, biochar and shade blocks.



To assist growers with weed management, researchers at Oregon State University expanded their evaluation of tiafenacil and floryprauxifen-benzyl on Christmas trees. In addition, they began evaluating two additional herbicide mixtures: nicosulfuron plus tolypyralate and haloxifen-methyl plus florasulam. The aim is to **expand future herbicide registrations tailored to the needs of the Christmas tree industry** in Oregon.

Because diseases, pests and adaptability to regional environmental conditions limit where Christmas tree growers can produce certain types of Christmas trees, researchers at Pennsylvania State University conducted studies to **identify disease and pest resistant sources of trees with superior growth and postharvest characteristics adapted to regional production conditions.** The project will help diversify tree species options and potentially improve tree establishment rates and greater resilience to climate change stressors.

It has been 22 years since efficacy trials have been conducted on fungicides to address passalora sequoia, a disease that impacts southern Christmas trees. In light of the costs and labor associated with applications of these fungicides, researchers at Auburn University **conducted studies of select fungicides to determine their efficacy, whether resistance has developed and to determine if newer chemistries have become available to address this blight.**

Researchers at Rutgers **launched an effort to determine whether Phytophthora vexans is causing disease in Christmas trees** by gathering isolates collected from symptomatic plants and gathering baseline data on pathogenicity and flood condition inoculations due to increasingly volatile climatic events. The information gathered will be used to lay the foundation for future variety and provenance trials.

Meet the Board:

Eastern Representatives:

Chuck Berry, Georgia
Renee Beutell, North Carolina
Sam Cartner, North Carolina
Gary Thomas, Maryland

Central Representatives:

Jane Neubauer, Ohio
Scott Powell, Michigan

Western Representatives

Chris Aldrich, Washington
Jan Hupp, Oregon
Kari Puffer, Oregon
Sophia Stajduhar, Washington
JoLynn Stroda, Oregon

Importer Representative

Ryan Tyce, Ontario, Canada

Meet the Staff

The RCTB is managed by Gray Management, LLC:

Marsha Gray – Executive Director,
marsha@realchristmastreeboard.org

Cyndi Knudson – Director of Research
Research@realchristmastreeboard.org

Jenny Tomaszewski – Administrative Assistant
Jenny@realchristmastreeboard.org

Michelle Rothmeyer, Gingerroot, LLC – Communications
Michelle@realchristmastreeboard.org

Beth Kohn, BAK Bookkeeping – Bookkeeper

Contact Us: Real Christmas Tree Board, P.O. Box 77, Howell, MI 48844
800-985-0773 ♦ info@realchristmastreeboard.org

RCTB 2024-25 Financials

Education

The Real Christmas Tree Board (Christmas Tree Promotion Board) is required to have an independent Certified Public Accountant audit its accounting records each fiscal year in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. The eighth audit of RCTB/CTPB was completed in October of 2025 by Propp Christensen Caniglia, Roseville, CA. They issued a clean opinion of RCTB's financial statement, also known as an "unmodified report" in accounting terminology. These highlights from the audit provide an overview of RCTB's financial status at the end of its 2024-2025 fiscal year. Please visit the RCTB website to see the full audit report

www.realchristmastreeboard.org/industry/

STATEMENTS OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES – MODIFIED CASH BASIS For the Year Ended July 31, 2025 and 2024

	2025	2024
Revenue:		
Assessments	\$1,365,636	\$1,544,754
Donations	3,946	1,393
Interest Income	53,906	19,283
Total Revenue	\$1,423,488	\$1,565,430
Expenses:		
Promotion Committee	\$802,759	\$917,722
Research Committee	181,477	235,000
Industry Relations Committee	45,670	29,835
Professional Services	249,258	241,998
Education	0	7,000
Independent Evaluation	11,000	0
Board Meetings	20,276	34,804
Compliance Auditing	39,462	45,040
Bank Fees	3,170	3,741
Insurance	4,021	4,000
Office Expenses	4,336	4,594
Other Administrative Costs	24,898	2,990
USDA Fees	91,297	96,019
Total Expenses	\$1,457,624	\$1,622,743
Change in unrestricted net assets	(\$34,136)	(\$57,313)
Net assets without donor restrictions, beginning of year	\$1,413,312	1,470,625
Net assets without donor restrictions, end of year	\$1,379,176	\$1,413,312

STATEMENTS OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS – MODIFIED CASH BASIS July 31, 2025 and 2024

	2025	2024
ASSETS		
Assets:		
Current Assets:		
Operating Cash	\$ 729,737	\$1,460,477
Cash Reserves	204,669	204,669
Investments	700,000	
Total Assets	\$1,634,406	\$1,665,146
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities:		
Accrued Expenses	\$255,230	\$251,834
Net Assets without donor restrictions:		
Designated by the Board for cash reserves:		
Reserve for future projects	87,318	87,318
Reserve for Research	117,351	117,350
Undesignated	1,174,507	1,208,643
Total Net Assets	\$1,379,176	\$1,413,312
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,634,406	\$1,665,146

Virtual Farm Trips

RCTB connected directly with students in its second year of virtual learning. Combined, the Oregon and North Carolina Virtual Farm Tours had a live Zoom audience of 420 classrooms and 7,891 students from more than 43 states. Both tours garnered another 1,743 views on YouTube as of February 1 and were very positively received according to a post-event survey. More than 92% of the respondents indicated the content aligned with their curriculum, with 80% noting they would recommend the tour to others. 74% noted they had a very positive opinion of the industry and another 24% had a positive opinion.

