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Eric & Gloria Sundback Named 2009 Grand Champions

August 14, 2009 (Chattanooga, TN) – Eric & Gloria Sundback of Shepherdstown, W.V., were selected as Grand Champions of the National Christmas Tree Contest this summer at the National Christmas Tree Association’s (NCTA) Annual Convention & Trade Show. Eric & Gloria Sundback are the owners and operators of the tree farm that submitted the prize-winning Fraser fir Christmas Tree. As Grand Champion Christmas Tree growers, the Sundbacks will present the official White House Christmas Tree to First Lady Michelle Obama for the 2009 Christmas season.

Trees in the contest competed in five species categories: True Fir, Douglas-fir, Spruce, Pine and Other. Convention attendees voted to select the first, second and third-place winners in each category. Then a panel of 20 judges from outside the industry chose the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion trees. These winners were announced at the Award Banquet Friday, Aug. 14.

“Since an American farmer gets to provide the Christmas Tree for the White House, it strengthens the fact that farm-grown trees are such an important tradition,” says National Christmas Tree Association President Mark Steelhammer, a Christmas Tree grower from

Rochester, Wash. “There is nothing better for this industry, and it is by far the highest honor you could ever receive as a tree farmer.”

A Douglas-fir tree, entered by McClellan’s Tree Farm LLC, owned and operated by Richard and Mary McClellan of Middleburg, Pa., was selected as the Reserve Champion in the National Tree Contest.

Complete List of Highest Finishers (by Category)

True Fir

First Place (Grand Champion)- Eric & Gloria Sundback, Eric & Gloria Sundback Trees, Shepherdstown, WV

Second Place- David Banner, Banner Brand Tree Farm, Newland, NC

Third Place- James Chapman, Silent Night Evergreens, Endeavor, WI

Douglas Fir

First Place (Reserve Champion)- Richard & Mary McClellan, McClellan’s Tree Farm LLC, Middleburg, PA

Spruce

First Place- Rex Korson, Korson’s Tree Farms, Sidney, MI

Second Place- John Hensler, Hensler Nursery, Hamlet, IN

Third Place- Duke Wheeler, Whitehouse Christmas Tree Farm, Whitehouse OH

Pine

First Place- Rondal & Louise Farmer, Heritage Hill Farm, Sparta, NC

Other

First Place- Wesley Bass, Bass Trees & Supply, Columbia, MS

Second Place- Stuart Smith, Wright’s Tree Farm, Ward, SC

Third Place- Ray Gilbert, Gilbert Christmas Tree Farm, Lanett, AL