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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schroeder's Forevergreens Named 2011 Grand Champion

August 19, 2011 (Chesterfield, MO) – Sue and Tom Schroeder, owners of Schroeder's Forevergreens in Neenah, Wis., became Grand Champion of the National Christmas Tree Contest this summer at the National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) Annual Convention & Trade Show. The convention was held in Huron, Ohio. The Schroeders entered a Balsam fir from their farm as the prize-winning conifer. As Grand Champion Christmas Tree growers, Sue and Tom will present the official White House Christmas Tree to First Lady Michelle Obama for the 2011 Christmas season to be displayed in the Blue Room.

Trees in the contest are entered into five species categories: True Fir, Douglas-fir, Spruce, Pine and Other. A panel of judges, made up of long-time growers and past contest winners, voted to select the first, second and third-place winners in each category. Then convention attendees and a panel of consumer judges voted for their favorite among the species finalists. Those vote totals determined the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion trees. The winners were announced at the Awards Banquet held Friday, Aug. 12.

“Since an American farmer gets to provide a Christmas Tree they grew for the White House to display, it strengthens the fact that farm-grown trees are such an important tradition in our country,” says NCTA President Richard Moore, a Christmas Tree grower from Groton, N.Y. “There is nothing better for our industry than to showcase our farm crop in the most famous house in America.”

The Schroeders have entered trees from their farm in the national contest before. To enter the national contest, growers must first win their state / regional competitions. 2011 was the fourth year the Schroeders had done that and entered a tree in the national contest. Finally winning the contest and earning Grand Champion status validated their hard work and persistence, said Sue Schroeder. “Entering but not winning the national contest is both rewarding and frustrating, knowing that you were so close, but finally winning is 100 percent exciting,” said Schroeder. “I know we’ll love the experience and we wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

A Scotch pine tree, entered by Dan and Ken Wahmoff, owners of Wahmoff Farms in Gobles, Mich., was selected as the Reserve Champion in the National Tree Contest. Traditionally, the Reserve Champion farmers have been able to provide a fresh Christmas tree from their farm for the residence of the Vice President.

White House staff will travel to the Schroeders' Wisconsin farm this fall to select the tree to be displayed in the Blue Room, serving as the centerpiece of the holiday decorations. The Blue Room tree will need be much bigger than the 6 to 8 foot contest trees, 18 ½ feet tall to be exact. The selected tree will be harvested and presented to the First Lady shortly after Thanksgiving. All of the contest trees, including the winners, following the convention were chipped into mulch and recycled.

Complete List of Highest National Tree Contest Finishers (by Category)

True Fir

First Place (Grand Champion) – Sue and Tom Schroeder, Schroeder's Forevergreens, in Neenah, Wis.

Second Place – Don and David Tucker of Tucker Tree Farms in Laurel Springs, N.C.

Third Place – Dave Vander Velden of Whispering Pines Tree Farm in Oconto, Wis.

Douglas-fir

First Place – Paul & Sharon Shealer of Evergreen Acres Tree Farm in Auburn, Pa.

Spruce

First Place – Glenn Battles of Sugar Pines Farm LLC in Chesterland, Ohio.

Second Place – Dale Hudler of Hudler Carolina Tree Farms in West Jefferson, N.C.

Pine

First Place – (Reserve Champion) Dan and Ken Wahmhoff of Wahmhoff Farms Nursery in Gobles, Mich.

Second Place – Geoff Feisley of Feisley Tree Farms in Belmont, Ohio.

Third Place – John Hensler of Hensler Nursery, Inc. in Hamlet, Ind.

Winners of the National Wreath contest, also held during the NCTA convention were:

Undecorated Wreath Category: Richard and Mary McClellan of McClellan's Tree Farm in Pennsylvania.

Decorated Wreath Category: Evelyn Casella of Christmas Creek Ranch in Washington.