

Calvin and Arlene Frelk Receive NCTA's Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award is one of NCTA's highest honors, recognizing years of dedication and service to the Real Tree industry. This year's recipients were no excep-



tion. Surrounded by family and friends, Calvin and Arlene Frelk were on hand at the 2011 NCTA Convention in Huron, Ohio, to receive this prestigious award.

As the founders of Northern Christmas Trees & Nursery in Merril-lan, Wis., the Frelks grew their business from the ground up. In 1955, Cal

and Arlene were living in Illinois and both working full-time jobs. After hearing about the opportuni-ties available in Christmas Trees, the couple, along

with Cal's brother, purchased 500 acres in Wisconsin. However, to finance the plan, they had to keep their days jobs and make the interstate commute every weekend to tend the trees.



That early hard work paid off, and in 1970, the Frelks earned the opportunity to present the Blue Room tree to First Lady Pat

Nixon after winning the National Tree Contest. Recognized for their high-quality trees, the couple has taken home numerous Grand Champion

ribbons at the state level and has supplied trees to the Governors of Wisconsin.

As their wholesale operation grew, the business required a full-time presence. So in 1972, Cal and Arlene took over the tree business in Wisconsin. Since then, the Frelks have welcomed family into the fold, first with their daughter and son-in-law, Ginger and John Ahl, in 1979, and most recently with their granddaughter Ashley in 2010.



Today, that farm that started on 500 acres has grown to be Wisconsin's largest Christmas Tree business, with more than 6,600 acres, as well as one of the largest pot-in-pot operations in the Midwest.

Recognizing the importance of working together with fellow growers, the couple joined the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association and NCTA in 1956, a year before their first harvest. That desire to work together for the good of the industry is one that would follow them throughout their careers, both in service to the association and in lobbying on its behalf in Washington.

Cal served as president of NCTA from 1978 to 1980, helping the association celebrate its 25th anniversary. Arlene, along with Ginger, has been active in lobbying for the Real Tree industry on the legislative front.

Craig Regelbrugge, Vice President of Government Relations & Research for the American Nursery & Landscape Association, has commented, "Whenever ANLA needs to get to Wisconsin representatives back at home, the Frelks have always been the first to step up. I have lobbied side by side with them and have been impressed with their practical grasp of the issues, their professionalism and their steadfastness."

Arlene has also served as a director for the National Council of Agricultural Employers and is active at the state and national meetings of Women in Agriculture.

In 2007, the Frelks were recognized with the Distinguished Service Award from the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation for their efforts in promoting industry issues in Washington, D.C.

Building a successful business from the ground up is an accomplishment in itself. Building a successful business, while tirelessly working to improve and grow the industry for future generations, is what Calvin and Arlene Frelk have achieved. 🌲

Past Award Winners

- 2002 – Hal Schudel
- 2004 – Paul Kirk, Sr.
- 2006 – Sam Cartner
- 2007 – Keith Jacob
- 2008 – Dale Shepherd
- 2009 – Theron "T" Stone
- 2010 – Paul Goodmonson