



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Weed Science Society of America Says There's No Place for Weeds at the Holidays!**

**LAWRENCE, KANSAS** – November 8, 2011 – Today the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) is spotlighting the impact of effective weed control on the holiday traditions we hold most dear – from the foods that grace our holiday table to the decorations that adorn our homes.

“A lot of behind the scenes effort is exerted by growers, land managers and other dedicated professionals to keep weeds at bay,” says Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D., science policy director of WSSA. “The steps they take help us preserve many of our most treasured foods and fun.”

Here are a few examples of the impact effective weed control makes on the holidays:

- **Christmas trees.** A fragrant pine or fir tree is often the centerpiece of a holiday gathering. Successful weed control helps growers produce better-looking Christmas trees – and far more of them. Weeds can shade out young trees, causing their bases to deform and inhibiting the growth of those lovely lateral branches that hold twinkling lights and our favorite ornaments.
- **Wrapping paper and cards.** Those beautiful holiday cards and the festive wrapping paper you use to decorate gifts for family and friends owe their existence to effective weed control. That's because companies producing paper products rely on a healthy crop of trees. Weeds left uncontrolled in commercial forests can crowd out the new seedlings planted to replace each year's harvest.
- **Football.** As you cheer for your favorite football team during holiday bowl games, remember success on the field starts at the ground level. A healthy stand of grass cushions falls and provides safe footing. As the turf thins from heavy use, weeds can crowd out the cushioning blades of grass. Turf management specialists use effective weed control techniques to keep the invaders “out of bounds.”
- **Holiday turkeys.** Effective weed control also impacts the succulent birds gracing many a holiday table. Uncontrolled weeds on poultry farms interfere with ventilation in the

houses where birds are raised, which can result in health problems. Dried weeds can endanger both birds and breeders by becoming a fire hazard – even on a free range farm.

- **Holiday hams.** Farmers producing pork are especially sensitive to weed control issues. Several weed species are poisonous to pigs, including common cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*), jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*) and other invasive plants commonly found in pastures.
- **Sweet potatoes and pumpkins.** Whether you prefer tasty sweet potatoes or pumpkin as a side dish or baked into a pie, say a special thanks to growers. To produce a bumper crop for holiday meals, both traditional and organic farmers focus on fighting back weeds that can crowd out crops. They use targeted synthetic or organic herbicides, tillage and hand weeding to ensure the best yield and quality.
- **Green beans, sweet peas and more.** Equally vigilant weed control efforts are behind the beans and peas found on many holiday menus. Both annual and perennial weeds can be problems in all vegetable crops. Weeds compete for space, moisture and nutrients and can harbor insect and disease pests.
- **Cranberries.** Colorful, perennial cranberries present a major weed control challenge. Their low, woody vines form a continuous, lawn-like swath across a bed or bog, making it impossible to till weeds without damaging the crop. Vigilant growers scout beds repeatedly through the growing season to spot problems and control them – pulling weeds by hand, suppressing them with sand, using selective herbicides and/or mowing the surrounding area to keep weeds from spreading.
- **Electricity.** A happy holiday season depends on energy for lights, heating systems, ovens, TV sets and a host of other appliances. Behind the scenes, power companies emphasize effective weed control so workers can maintain and repair vital lines. Unchecked weedy trees and brush can damage lines and obstruct access during an outage.

“Weed control may not sound like an issue close to home and hearth, but it touches many aspects of our lives,” Van Wychen says. “To preserve our favorite holiday traditions, we need to invest in research and in innovative practices for integrated weed management.”

### **About the Weed Science Society of America**

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).