Arkansas Tree Farm Program recognized the Pamela Jolly as the Tree Farmer of the Year at the Arkansas Forestry Association (AFA) Annual Meeting held virtually on October 1.

Pamela Jolly is the proud and involved owner of the Patton Tree Farm, a 222-acre forest located in Yell County near Danville. The farm is named for her father, James Patton, who instilled in her land ownership values and land conservation responsibility for equity, livelihood, and wildlife. To honor her father and their common interest, she bought her timberland in 2015. Pam’s management strategies and goals go hand in hand with the American Tree Farm System’s core values. Wood, water, wildlife, and recreation are a big part of her long-term management goals. Pam has had a commercial pine thinning on the 40-acre pine plantation and 181 acres of injection that home range, quail require various habitat types or land use practices. The percentage of the landscape designated as covey headquarters can range between 1-20% of the area. The percentage of the landscape designated as covey headquarters can range between 1-20% of the total area with the remainder set aside for the other habitat components needed by quail. Covey headquarters should be provided in clusters of not less than 30 feet by 50 feet blocks of shrubs that are not more than 150 feet apart, which will allow the quail to have quick access to their escape cover if the need arises.

Shrubs that serve well for this habitat component include: American (wild) & Chickasaw plum, fragrant & smooth sumac, rough-leaved dogwood, deciduous holly, cockspur hawthorn, and American beautyberry. Plum thickets are an excellent example of quail covey headquarters and occur naturally on many properties across Arkansas.

How’s Your Habitat? Shrub Thickets - Covey Headquarters for Quail

The northern bobwhite (Colinus virginianus) is the native quail species found throughout Arkansas. These predominantly ground-dwelling birds are primarily found in areas that contain large amounts of edge habitat. Edges are boundaries between different habitat types or land use practices. The home range of a quail covey can cover as little as 20 acres up to 160 acres. In that home range, quail require various types of habitat, including: escape cover, nestling habitat, brood rearing habitat, and feeding and loafing areas. So, what is a “covey headquarters” and how does it fit into the equation for great quail habitat? Covey headquarters are patches of escape cover with dense, shrubby canopy cover and little ground-level vegetation. Headquarters are used by quail on a daily basis to provide protection against severe weather and predators along with resting & loafing areas. The percentage of the landscape designated as covey headquarters can range between 1-20% of the total area with the remainder set aside for the other habitat components needed by quail. Covey headquarters should be provided in clusters of not less than 30 feet by 50 feet blocks of shrubs that are not more than 150 feet apart, which will allow the quail to have quick access to their escape cover if the need arises.

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Hunting Season is Here

With the 2020-21 Arkansas deer season underway, now is the time to be reminded of some safety procedures to minimize risks.

Here are some risk management activities that hunters and landowners can employ to limit exposure to accidental injuries this hunting season.

Tree Stands:
• Check the structural integrity of the tree you plan to use for your stand. Be sure it can accommodate your weight and the weight of your stand.
• Look for any dead limbs overhead.
• Check and repair existing tree stands and make sure they are properly secured and stable.
• Attach new ropes to raise and lower tree stand items and firearms.

Gates:
• Accidents can occur when crossing gates and fences by either climbing over them or driving through them.
• Unload your weapon and lay it down or properly secure it before climbing a gate or fence.
• Clear the vegetation around gates and fence crossings.
• Mark gates with reflective material that is visible from outside and inside the gate.
• Mark gate post with reflective tape.

Landowners may also consider purchasing hunting lease liability insurance or timberland liability insurance policies for added protection. For more information, visit https://www.arforests.org/page/insurance.

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Covey Headquarters, continued

Existing Thickets - Protect and manage any existing plum or other shrubby thickets on your property. These shrubby thickets can be improved to better benefit quail. If invasive grass species have taken over the ground-level cover, those grasses should be treated with a herbicide, timing depending on whether they are warm season or cool season. This will re-open that ground-level cover making it easier for quail to move throughout the headquarters. Also, any over-hanging or adjacent trees to the plum thicket should be removed from the area. This strategy will help reduce predation from overhead predators and the area. This strategy will help reduce plum thicket should be removed from throughout the headquarters. Also, any cover making it easier for quail to move to escape from ground predators.

Creating Thickets - If thickets do not occur naturally on your land, they can be established by planting seeds, seedlings or container-grown shrubs. For beautyberry, dogwood & sumac, spacing should be on a 3 foot by 6 foot spacing. Other shrubs can be planted on a 5 foot by 8 foot spacing. Just remember, thickets intended for use as covey headquarters should be established in edge habitat, those areas of transition between habitat types and in open fields lacking shrubby cover. After you have identified the best location for your headquarters, the existing vegetation should be controlled using an herbicide before you plant the shrubs. This will promote the growth of your new plantings as well as open the ground-level cover to facilitate quail movement throughout the new headquarters.

Headquarters Maintenance - Whether you have existing or newly planted covey headquarters, you should avoid damaging these when conducting other habitat management practices on your property, i.e. prescribed burning or diskng. Herbicides can be used to control invasive grasses within and around your thickets; however care should be used to avoid spraying shrubs. Also, livestock should be excluded from these areas to maintain the integrity of the thicket as a quail covey headquarters.

Check out the Arkansas Game and Fish webpage for more info at: http://www.agfc.com/habitat.

Seedling Options for Reforestation

Written by Regine Skelton, County Forester, Arkansas Department of Agriculture - Forestry Division

Many changes have occurred in the forest industry over the last decade, and options for replanting harvested forestlands have been expanded. What are these new options, and how do landowners know if they are a good match for them?

Woods-Run seedlings are native unimproved Loblolly pine seedlings. Open Pollinated seedlings are produced from uncontrolled breeding in Loblolly pine orchards.

Improved seedlings have been selected and bred to grow faster, develop straighter stems, develop crowns that self-prune better, have better branch angles, and have better disease resistance.

Mass Control Pollinated (MCP or sometimes CMP) seedlings are produced by manually pollinating the seed cones of pines.

VARIETAL PINES are clones produced from one genetic source and will be genetically identical; however, microenvironmental conditions can affect the trees' final form. Several factors should be considered when choosing between these options, such as where and when seedlings will be planted, the plantation's purpose, and the funds available to invest. Landowners with poor soils, limited funds, or intentions to harvest the stand at the pulpwood stage are usually best off choosing open-pollinated seedlings to keep costs low. Landowners with high-quality soils and enough funds to provide ample site-preparations to provide seedlings with the best conditions can make notable gains by planting Improved, MCP, or even Varietal pines. In some situations, landowners can strategically plant the less expensive trees to be used as “trainer trees” on 3rd or 5th rows to be culled in the first thinning as a means to reduce cost but still achieve benefits associated with genetic gain for longer-term stands (such as growing to saw timber or poles rather than clear-cut at pulpwood stage).

Landowners should carefully consider why they are planting trees and the resources available to invest in establishing those trees. Choose varieties that meet your goals and available resources, and reach out to the UA Extension Service and/or your local Forester with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture - Forestry Division to help you navigate the process of matching the appropriate variety for your land and goals.

Mark your calendars

October 29 - 2 p.m. WEBINAR: How Both Short and Long-term Wildlife Research can Inform Management

November 4 - 7:15 a.m. WEBINAR: Day 1 Sessions - Healthy Forests: Managing for Bugs, Wildlife and Big Trees

November 5 - 7:15 a.m. WEBINAR: Day 2 Sessions - Healthy Forests: Managing for Bugs, Wildlife and Big Trees

November 5 - 12:00 p.m. WEBINAR: Forestry for Birds and Commonly Used Herbicides for Habitat Management

For information on registering for the webinars visit www.forestrywebinars.net