AR Tree Farm Program Holds 2021 Tree Farm Inspector Field Day & Awards Ceremony

The tree farm inspectors visit the Jabo Lake Tract Tree Farm with owner Anne D’Azezze and her husband on December 10.

On December 10, 34 tree farm inspectors gathered at the Vines Center in Ferndale to further their knowledge on Tree Farm Standards and the new Arkansas Landscape Management Plan at the 2021 Tree Farm Inspector Field Day & Awards Ceremony.

The group met at Cabe Hall around 8:30 a.m. and was welcomed by the Arkansas Tree Farm Coordinator Jennifer Johnson. Carroll Guffey, a Tree Farm Inspector facilitator, led an overview of the 2021 Tree Farm Standards, which every inspector must know while conducting an inspection. All 34 inspectors then had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss those standards with a panel of Tree Farm Committee members, including John Cook, Tabitha Holloway, and Justin Mallett.

With the standards fresh on their mind, the group traveled to the Jabo Lake Tract Tree Farm owned by Anne D’Azezze. Bill Whiting, the inspector for the property, guided the group through some details about the area. The foresters then conducted a mock inspection to see how many standards the group retained. D’Azezze, along with her husband, discussed the history of the land and their goals with their management.

Once the inspectors finished a short tour of the land, they returned to Cabe Hall to continue the inspection process. Johnson helped guide the group through entering all the data gathered at the D’Azezze property. Everyone discussed special filters, where to access resources needed to complete the inspection, and the process to correctly complete an online inspection form.

A quick lunch separated this discussion and the Tree Farm Awards. Each year, inspectors are recognized for their work throughout the year. The Outstanding District Award was given to District 1, consisting of east and southeast Arkansas. Inspector of the Year was awarded to Sam Denison with Silvicult, Inc. and Regine Skelin with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Forestry Division received the District Chair Award. The Agency Award went to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Forestry Division, and Silvicult, Inc. won the Corporate Award.

The Arkansas Tree Farm Program also presents a set of Hard Hat Awards, highlighting inspectors introducing new tree farms to the program, gold (100 new tree farms), silver (50 new tree farms), and bronze (25 new tree farms). Two inspectors received the Bronze Hard Hat Award. Those inspectors were Sam Denison with Silvicult, Inc. and Zachary Abbott with Davis Dubose Knight Forestry & Real Estate, LLC.

One of the final items on the agenda for the afternoon included a video from the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) on what folks can expect with the new Arkansas Landscape Management Plan. The about 30-minute lesson preceded a Zoom meeting with Steve Lloyd, the southern representative with ATFS, where inspectors could ask questions about the plan with one of the experts of the various LMPs around the country.

Caroll Guffey provides an update to the 2021 Tree Farm Standards to a group of 34 Tree Farm inspectors.

Johnson explained that an event like this one provides a lot to all the inspectors who commit their time to more training.

“Events like this are essential, not just because of the formal training that the inspectors receive but also the peer-to-peer learning,” Johnson said. “Inspectors have the opportunity to ask questions from other foresters, learn the best ways to approach situations and provide landowner outreach. Plus, they get to see their efforts recognized at the awards ceremony. It’s education and a lot of fun.”

The Arkansas Forestry Association administers the Arkansas Tree Farm Program. There are 615 tree farmers in the state representing 489,443 acres of certified timberland. For more information on the Arkansas Tree Farm Program, visit https://www.arkforests.org/page/treefarm.
Finding Hidden Grasslands: Savannas, Open Woodlands, and Glades
By: Morgan Meador, Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Oxidized by the lack of natural disturbance (e.g., fire) and land use changes, our native savannas, open woodlands, and glades have been lost. These types of grasslands are generally described as open forested systems with a diverse herbaceous understory. Since these types of forested habitats are rare and/or declining across their range, the species that depend on these habitats (predominately herbageous habitats) are also declining. Species such as northern bobwhite quail, Eastern collared lizards, and monarch butterflies depend on these open forest conditions and natural glade openings within the forest complex.

The best examples of these few remaining natural landscapes can be found in the statewide system of Natural Areas that is overseen by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. However, over 80% of Arkansas' land is privately owned, and with that fact in mind, the management and conservation of Arkansas' declining natural resources falls on the shoulders of private landowners.

1. Post and Blackjack Oaks

2. Shortleaf Pine
3. Plant indicator species (e.g., royal catchfly, tall golden milkweed, white wild indigo, rattlesnake master, compass plant, etc.)
4. Rocky soil or outcrops with sparse covering of native grasses, wildflowers, cacti, and stunted trees
5. Areas with limestone or dolomite bedrock, that has an abundance of eastern redbud

Royal Catchfly (Silene regia) is an example of a grassland indicator plant that landowners should keep an eye out for on their property. Source: Morgan Meador

6. Pimple mounds
7. Rolling to flat landscapes with infertile soils (e.g., sandy, seasonally wet, gravelly, clay hardpan, or shallow)

Being aware of these unique grassland systems is the first step towards conserving them. Many of the management strategies (e.g., prescribed fire, TSU/FSR) that are currently used in forested systems are used to restore savannas, open woodlands, and glades.

These grasslands are like a "diamond in the rough" typically concealed in forested areas, and with the application of prescribed fire and thinning (when appropriate) these systems can flourish and provide important ecological services.

If you want to see reference photos of these habitats, please visit Southeastern Grasslands Initiative’s website (https://www.segrasslands.org/).

CALANDER OF EVENTS

**January 5**
10:00 a.m. - Tree Farm Committee Meeting
Zoom/AF OA Office
Little Rock

**January 6**
10:00 a.m. - Landowner Education Committee Meeting
Zoom/AF OA Office
Little Rock

**January 14**
11:15 a.m. - ELP Graduation Lunch
Brave New Restaurant
Little Rock

**January 20**
11:30 a.m. - WOW Lunch & Learn: Saving the Bald Eagle in Arkansas
Zoom

**January 28**
11:30 a.m. - Landowner Zoom Workshop: Tree City USA & Other Programs Arkansas Forestry Division
Provide Zoom

**February 10**
11:30 a.m. - WOW Lunch & Learn: Timber Financing
Zoom

Please Note:
Please visit our calendar at arknets.org for more information on any of the above Zoom meetings.

For meetings held at the AFA Office, please park on the street or in one of the area lots – do not park in the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce parking lot.

8 Ways to Sustainably Recycle Your Christmas Tree

Each year, those who celebrate Christmas are presented with a choice of getting a fake Christmas tree or a real one. Those who choose to support local tree farms who grow these holiday-household centerpiece may not know what exactly do to with it once the season is over. The Arbor Day Foundation website provides a few ideas on sustainably recycling that tree post-December 25.

If you want less of a hands-on approach, many communities provide free Christmas tree recycling where they can make mulch, compost, or woodchips. Check with your local city or county officials to learn if a service like this is offered where you live.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, one of the first eight different ways you can make that tree last is to chop it up for firewood. Make sure you burn the wood outside due to the high levels of sap that evergreens can contain.

Real tree owners can also use the needles or woodchips to create mulch for other trees in your yard. The needles contain nutrients that enhance the PH of the soil if it is more alkaline. When adding them to your compost pile, dose them with plenty of water and then mix them in well.

Even if your tree is dead, it can still be used to foster wildlife in your area. Hang bird feeders to turn your Christmas tree into a bird sanctuary. Keep an eye on it as more and more critters will eventually follow to call it home.

If you have a body of water on your property, you can drop your tree in there, where it can become a reserve for fish. Once submerged, the tree will start to form algae that fish can feed on, and the tree itself can act as protection from predators.

Ash from burned wood can be spread on your garden. Wood ash contains nutrients like potassium and lime that help plants thrive. It also helps keep unwanted insects away.

Another way to reuse your tree is to cut the branches off and lay them in your garden bed. This acts as protection from winter freezes and spring thaws.

Fresheners or coasters can be made for those looking for a creative way to recycle that Christmas tree. If the needles are still green, strip them and store them in paper bags or sachets for fresheners. You can also cut the trunk into one-inch coasters. Ensure that the tree is completely dry before cutting and varnish them before setting your drink down.

For those who like to see the article in full, visit https://arboradayblog.org/holiday/sustainable-ways-to-recycle-your-christmas-tree/.

Arkansas Forestry Association Leadership for 2022

2022 Officers
President - Mark Karnes, The Ross Foundation
Vice President - Tammy Waters, Domtar
Secretary - Greg Hay, ArborGen
Treasurer - Tom Crowder, Bragg Land Company

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Dru Burbord, Georgia-Pacific
Ray Dillon, Dillon Consulting
Jason Gibson, Weyerhaeuser
Robert Gray, PotlatchDeltic
Tim Hahn, West Fraser
Ryan Hendrix, Green Bay Packaging
Allen Morgan, Hunter-Wasson Inc.
Pete Prutzman, Retired, Kingwood Forestry Services
Bobby Taylor, Shelby Taylor Trucking
Frank Wilson, Wilson Bros. Lumber