

[Back to
Extension Home Page](#)

[Back to
Newsletter Index](#)

[Back to
Extension Publications](#)

[Back to Florida Forestry Information](#)

THE FLORIDA FOREST STEWARD A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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[Highlights from September Longleaf Workshops](#)

[Wildfire Preparedness](#)

[The Rural Land Stewardship Act: Testing a New Method of Protecting Rural Lands](#)

[Wildlife Plant Feature - Oaks](#)

[Timber Price Update](#)

[Upcoming Events - Florida Forestry Information Bulletin Board](#)

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Highlights from September Longleaf Workshops

Fall greetings to you and yours. It was good to see many of you at our longleaf pine workshops in September and we look forward to visiting more at our property tours this fall and winter. This article shares some of the highlights of the longleaf workshops for those who were unable to attend.

Mark Hains of the Longleaf Alliance gave us the latest on planting, site preparation and seedling selection. Here are the take-home points:

1- Make sure the seedlings you buy are compatible with the planting operation. If you are hand-planting, don't settle for bareroot seedlings when you can get far better survival, and therefore a more likely return on your investment, with containerized seedlings. A 1995 region-wide survey demonstrated that containerized seedling survival averaged 85%, compared to 65% with bareroot. Bareroot seedlings can be well-suited for machine planting on intensively prepared sites, but containerized are the preferred choice for hand-planting.

2- If contracting a planter, choose one with longleaf experience. This is critical. Ask for references and make sure your contractor and seedlings are compatible. Don't buy bareroot seedlings if your contractor only has experience with containerized or vice versa.

3- Supervise the planting operation. You or your forester should see that the operation meets your quality standards.

4- Plant containerized seedlings early - before Christmas, but only when the soils have adequate moisture.

5- When planting on sites with bermuda grass or bahiagrass, scalp the planting rows. If bermuda grass is present, apply herbicide before scalping. Apply one of these broadcast treatments the August

before planting:

- a) 5-6 qt Accord per acre or
- b) 3 qt Accord + 2 oz Oust per acre or
- c) 20-24 oz Arsenal per acre

6- Plant at the right depth. Some new findings by the Longleaf Alliance suggest that, for containerized seedlings, shallow planting with the plug protruding 1-2 inches above the soil surface is best in a scalped row. See Mark's article about this in the Winter 2003 (Volume 9, No. 4) issue of the Florida Forest Steward (online at www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/FFSn1/ffsn194.htm).

Order Seedlings Now

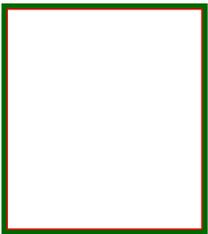
The Division of Forestry's Andrews Nursery begins accepting seedling order forms for the December-February tree planting season on July 1 of each year. Seedling order forms can be obtained by calling Andrews Nursery at 352-493-6096, or from your local field office of the Florida Division of Forestry. Completed forms may be submitted in person at Andrews Nursery or one of the Division of Forestry district offices. Seedlings are sold on a "first come/first served" basis until the inventory of each species is depleted. Seedlings may be ordered in bundles of 250 or 500, or in increments of 1,000. All copies of the order form must be submitted when your order is placed. A copy will be returned as your receipt with an assigned ORDER NUMBER. Please save the form and refer to this number when discussing your order with the nursery. As of November 4, the supply of longleaf bareroot and containerized seedlings at Andrew's Nursery is plentiful (along with the other species) so it's not too late.

The table below is an alphabetical listing of private nurseries around Florida, including a few in Georgia and Alabama:

American Tree Seedling, Inc.* 229-246-2662	Chiappini Farm* Toll-free: 800-293-5413	Meeks' Farms / Nursery, Inc.* Mickey Parker: 850-476-4815 or 850-438-2619 mobile: 850-572-3932 Steve Meeks' mobile: 912-536-3844	The Liner Tree Farm Inc.* (nursery supply) Toll-free: 800 330-1484
Blanton's Longleaf Container Nursery * 850-973-2967	Chiappini Farm* Toll-free: 800-293-5413	Mobley Plant Company* Don Moore 229-985-5544	The Natives* 2929 Carter Rd. Davenport, FL 33837 941-422-6664

Buckeye Nursery, Inc. Toll-free 800-838-2218	Dwight Stansel Farm & Nursery* 386-963-2827	Simmons Tree Farm* Terrell Simmons 912-375-7520	The Treehouse Florida Fancy, Inc. / Parrish, FL 34219 813-722-1441
Central Florida Lands and Timber 386-294-1211	Georgia SuperTree Nursery * Toll-free: 800-554-6550	Speedling, Inc. 813-645-3261	
Chestnut Hill Nursery, Inc. (specializing in fruit and nut trees)* Toll-free: 800-669-2067	International Forest Company* Toll free: 800-633-4506	Superior Trees, Inc. Lee Nursery* 850-971-5159	

* = sell longleaf seedlings



Wildfire Preparedness

Dr. Alan Long

The catastrophic wildfires in southern California remind us once again that homes in wildland settings are vulnerable to fire. It's been several years since Florida last experienced anything close to the California havoc; but it will happen here again, and in any given year small numbers of homes burn in Florida as the result of wildfires. As we enter into the normal fall dry season, with the even drier spring season not too far away, it may be a good time to assess your risk and plan for reducing the fire hazards around you.

There are three primary ways in which a fire burning in adjacent vegetation (such as forests or grasslands) can ignite a home:

- 1) Firebrands or floating embers, can lead to home ignitions if they land on flammable objects, such as wood shingles or wood decks.
- 2) Direct flame contact - A house can ignite if flames from plants or other materials burning nearby come in contact with the house for a long enough time.
- 3) If exposed to high radiant heat for a long enough time, certain materials (such as vinyl siding or single pane windows) will ignite, melt, or sustain damage and allow embers or flames to reach flammable parts of your home.

Characteristics of a home and its surrounding landscape can directly influence these ignition pathways and, therefore, a home's level of wildfire risk. Firebrands may be a problem even if the fire is far from the house. However, direct flame contact and radiant heat effects are very dependent on vegetation and fuels in the landscaping adjacent to the house. Creating defensible space around your home is critical to reducing those ignition sources. Defensible space provides access around your house for fire fighting crews and should be at least 30 feet away from the house. To create defensible space around your home, it is not necessary to remove all plants.

- Create islands or clumps of plants that are separated by areas that won't burn readily, such as lawn, dirt, or gravel/stone walkways.
- Prune plants so that the lowest tree branches are separated vertically from the tallest shrubs or grass by at least 10 feet.
- Isolate or remove plants that are known to be highly flammable.
- Maintain a space of 3 to 5 feet immediately adjacent to the house that is cleared of all shrubs and dead plant materials.

For each of the following factors that may be contributing to your wildfire hazard, action(s) are listed that will reduce that hazard.

If house has wood roof or deck,

- replace wood shingles with Class A shingles (asphalt, fiberglass, tiles)
- install nonflammable skirting around wood deck if not already present
- install sprinkler system with reliable water supply to cover roof and/or deck

If house has wood or vinyl siding,

- clear flammable vegetation and mulch from a 5-10 foot zone around structure

-create defensible space at least 30 to 60 feet from home

If shrub plant communities dominate adjacent wildlands and defensible space is <60 feet,

- use mowers, hand-held tools, herbicide applications or prescribed burning to permanently reduce shrubs up to at least 60 feet from structure
- increase distance to 100 feet in areas with dense shrubs more than 6 feet tall
- thin out (i.e., reduce the density of) shrubs and trees in the area beyond 60 feet from the house (up to 150 feet)

If shrub plant communities dominate adjacent wildlands, defensible space is >60 feet

- thin out (i.e., reduce the density of) shrubs and trees in the area beyond 60 feet from the house (up to 150 feet)

If significant woody debris (downed trees and branches) is present in adjacent wildlands and defensible space <60 feet,

- use prescribed burning or chipping equipment to reduce the amount of large woody debris
- pile & burn

If grasses dominate adjacent wildlands and defensible space <30 feet,

- mow regularly to keep grass short
- use goats, sheep, or cattle to keep grass short
- install sprinkling system in area from 0-30 feet from house

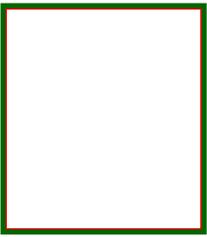
If house has open foundation,

- clear flammable vegetation and mulch from a 5-10 foot zone around structure
- install nonflammable skirting around foundation

Several other practices are important in all situations where you may have any risk of wildfires approaching your home

- regularly remove pine needles or leaves that accumulate on your roof or around the base of your home
- avoid wood piles, gas tanks or flammable mulches in direct contact with the side of your house or adjacent wood structures.

Additional information on risk assessment and hazard reduction are available from your County Forester (ask for Wildfire Hazard Assessment Guide for Homeowners), County Extension Office (Landscaping in Florida with Fire in Mind), county/city fire and rescue services, or the national Firewise Web site (www.firewise.org).



The Rural Land Stewardship Act: Testing a New Method of Protecting Rural Lands

Is it possible to accommodate all the population growth that is projected for a fast-growing rural area while still maintaining its rural character, property values, and protecting natural resources? A new initiative in the Florida Statutes is aiming to find out.

The Rural Land Stewardship Act (Section 163.3177(11)(d) Florida Statutes) was passed to promote a new method of protecting rural lands with high urban development potential. This will be accomplished through a new system of Transferable Land Use Credits, whereby private landowners are provided equity for their natural resources. Landowners get credits that can be transferred for development in planned locations. At first glance you might think this is just another kind of conservation easement program where development rights are purchased by public dollars, but it is not. Instead of using public dollars to purchase development rights, the Rural Land Stewardship Program (RLSP) uses real market forces to drive conservation and total infrastructure development in tandem.

Transferable Land Use Credits: Market Forces, Natural Resources and the Multiplier Effect

The Rural Land Stewardship Program starts with grouping land uses into multiple layers: residential uses, mineral uses, recreational uses, and agricultural uses. Each land use layer is given a base credit value, which are added together to make a total of 1 full credit. Natural resources are then factored in as a multiplier value. While a conservation easement program gives value for a single layer - the residential land use layer - RLSP provides landowners with values for multiple land uses that increase in value if natural resources are present.

Let's use an example to illustrate how this part of the program might work: You have 200 acres of forest land in a fast-growing area and a developer has offered you \$250,000 for the property, but this land has been in your family for several generations and you would much rather see the land stay intact and productive for timber and wildlife benefits. You have been actively managing your property for timber and wildlife for several years. You have longleaf pine and gopher tortoises on about 70 acres on a sandhill and you have a wetland on the back forty with lots of pitcher plants and other unique plants. Your county, having adopted the Rural Land Stewardship Program, factors in credits for those natural resource values and determines that your total property value is actually 1.5 times that for residential value only. Now you can opt for transferable land use credits, worth \$375,000, to retain the full ownership and equity of your land with the opportunity to transfer one or more of your land values for development to another planned location in the county.

The Opposite of Sprawl is Cluster

What sets this program apart from other land conservation programs is its holistic scope - conservation and development are planned together and with the input of private landowners so that small towns, with all necessary infrastructure and services, are developed within the context of a rural landscape of private agricultural and forest lands. This is accomplished by requiring developers to have a minimum number of credits in order to break ground. Since the credits can only be purchased from the surrounding landowners, the landowners automatically become partners in the development process. A developer interested in building houses must have a package of credits before the development is approved - in addition to houses, the development must include all necessary infrastructure and services close by. This is done to create a small town surrounded by private forest and agricultural lands. The aim of this strategy is to prevent the kind of development that is all too common - an uncontrolled, sprawling series of strip malls unconnected to existing infrastructure, raising property taxes and resulting in traffic, congestion, and an overall decreased quality of life for the area.

Rural Land Stewardship Pilot Projects in Collier County

Such a system of credits was established in a 300 square-mile area of Collier County. This area will be developed over the next 25 years with the development footprint covering just 10% of that land base. Villages and towns will be built, surrounded by extensive areas of private open space to maintain rural character. Altogether, 90,000 acres of environmentally sensitive lands will be permanently protected with conservation easements; and residential development rights will be removed from another 85,000 acres of land that will remain in agriculture and open space.

What makes this project attractive is its cost-effectiveness. Under RLSP, all of this is planned to be accomplished for a cost of \$800,000; the cost of creating a Geographic Information System (GIS) overlay of the area, ground verification of the overlay, public meetings, stakeholder meetings, an economic analysis, and development of a Comprehensive Plan amendment and the necessary Land Development codes. Not a single public dollar will be used to buy easements or development rights. Development pays for itself by leveraging each public dollar many times over.

For the sake of comparison, under the RLSP, this \$800,000 will protect approximately 350 times the area with environmentally sensitive lands, water features, agriculture and open space than would be protected with the same investment using conservation easements. It would require a public investment of \$250-300 million to achieve the same result through fee and less-than-fee purchases.

For more information about this project, contact Craig Evans of Stewardship America, Inc., 621 NW 53rd Street, Suite 240, Boca Raton, FL 33487, 561-995-1474, email craig@privatelands.org, on the Web at privatelands.org.



Wildlife Plant Feature - Oaks

Fall is acorn season, particularly for the sweet white oak species that are consumed by many animals. The nineteen species of oaks native to Florida are a small segment of the beech family (Fagaceae) which includes beeches, chestnuts, chinkapins and oaks. The oaks are economically important trees worldwide and are valuable wildlife food in the form of acorns. There are over 300 species of oaks worldwide and they are divided into two groups: white oaks and red (or sometimes black) oaks.

The White Oak Group

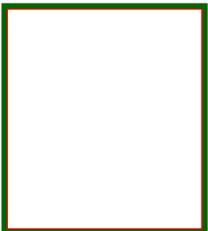
Eight members of the white oak group are native to Florida: bluff oak, Chapman oak, chinkapin oak, live oak, overcup oak, post oak, swamp chestnut oak and white oak. All have alternately arranged leaves, usually with rounded tips and rounded lobes. The inner surface of the acorn shell is smooth and the acorns generally germinate in the fall of the year. Acorns mature in the fall of the year they are formed (annual oaks) and are sweeter than those of the bitter red oak group, making them more palatable to both humans and wildlife. Florida wildlife that heavily use acorns, especially between fall and spring, include deer, turkey, squirrels, wild hogs and black bears.

The Red Oak Group

Eleven members of the red oak group are native to Florida: black oak, blackjack oak, bluejack oak, laurel oak, myrtle oak, Shumard oak, southern red oak, swamp red oak, turkey oak, water oak and willow oak. All exhibit alternate, pointed and/or bristle-tipped leaves. Acorns take two years to mature (biennial oaks) and are generally bitter to the taste, with woolly or silky inner linings in a tough outer shell. These seeds generally germinate (sprout) in the spring.

Reference

Arny, N. 1996. Common oaks of Florida. Fact Sheet FOR 51, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida (online at edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr004).



Timber Price Update

This information is useful for observing trends over time, but does not necessarily reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale would be wise to let a consulting forester help them obtain the best current prices. Note that price per ton for each product is now included in parentheses after the price per cord.

Stumpage price ranges reported across Florida in the 3rd quarter 2003 Timber Mart-South (TMS) report were \$19-\$30/cord (\$7-\$11/ton) for pine pulpwood, \$47-\$71/cord (\$18-\$26/ton) for pine C-N-S, \$76-\$109/cord (\$28-\$41/ton) for pine sawtimber, and \$102-\$120/cord (\$38-\$45/ton) for pine plylogs. On average, prices were up for all products, except C-N-S, from 2nd quarter 2003 prices. Hardwood pulpwood prices ranged from \$17-\$27/cord (\$6-\$9/ton), which was up from those of the previous quarter. A more complete summary of 3rd quarter 2003 stumpage prices is available at your County Extension office. See www.forest2market.com for weekly, South-wide, per-ton price updates for the major pine and hardwood timber products.

Trend Report

The wetter-than-normal weather had some effect on logging in most states during the July-September period. For the first time south-wide hardwood pulpwood prices exceeded those of pine pulpwood. Wet conditions resulted in some concern on the part of pulp mills about winter supplies of hardwood raw material. The big news maker since mid year has been plywood, where price increases were noticed by the Wall Street Journal and USA Today. With production of structural panels down in recent quarters, the increase in price was more likely due to reduced supply than increased demand except after Hurricane Isabel hit the east coast.

Click on the link to see the [graph](#) - use the "Back" function to return here.

