



American Tree Farm System

Sustaining forests, watersheds and healthy habitats through the power of private stewardship

About Tree Farming

What is Tree Farming?

"Wood is a crop. Forestry is Tree Farming."
— Gifford Pinchot, First chief of the USDA Forest Service.

The term "tree farming" was first used in the 1940's to introduce the public to sustainable forestry terminology they could easily understand. Farming implies continual stewardship and production of goods year after year. By linking the term "farming" with trees, foresters could communicate the concept of sustainable production of forest products over time. Tree Farming implies commitment to the land and was the philosophical opposite of the "cut-out and get-out" philosophy of the early 20th century.

Tree Farms are more than pine plantations or Christmas tree farms. Tree Farms are varied in nature and contain many different habitats and stages of forest regeneration, from seedlings to mature timber. Biodiversity is a critical component of a certified Tree Farm. Tree Farmers must maintain natural forest buffers and other aspects of conservation techniques.

ATFS was established in response to concerns that America's private forests were being cut at unsustainable rates without reforestation. It all began in 1941 when the first Tree Farm was designated in Washington State. The Tree Farm's purpose was to demonstrate sound forest management practices to area landowners. California's Tree Farm program started later in 1941 and has grown to include nearly 600 Tree Farms covering 3.5 million acres of the state.

Getting Started in Sustainable Forestry

Sound, sustainable forests begin with determining objectives, deciding what resources are available on your land, and developing a written forest management plan that meets ATFS standards and guidelines as well as meeting your forest needs for generations to come. A professional forester can answer your questions and help you develop your management plan.

The American Tree Farm System has developed a [management plan template](#) that can be used in the development of new forest management plans. The template is intended as a helpful guide, containing all of the major sections required in Tree Farm management plans according to the AFF Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification.

Sustainable Forestry Defined

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Sustainable forestry means managing our forests to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic which integrates the reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat and aesthetics.

U.S. Forests Facts & Figures 2001, Clemson University and AFF

American Tree Farm System

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