

Sustainable Forests

A resource for Georgia landowners, sponsored by the SFI Implementation Committee.

Knowing When to Burn

There are several signs that a prescribed burn may be good for your property.



Reduce Dry Underbrush - If your pine forest has a lot of dry underbrush, a well-planned, prescribed fire will reduce the accumulation of combustible vegetation and reduce the chance of a wildfire or minimize damage if a wildfire occurs.

Improve Wildlife Habitat - Does your forest have very little plant variety? Periodic fire will ensure you have a mix of understory species, which promotes a large and varied wildlife population, and can also be used to improve forage for grazing wildlife.

Reforestation - Prescribed fire can be useful for establishing a new pine forest, whether through direct seeding, planting or natural regeneration.

Manage Competing Vegetation - Weeds and undesirable tree and shrub species may crowd out planted pines or naturally regenerated pines or hardwoods. A carefully prescribed burn can eliminate this competition and promote growth of desired species.

Control Insects and Disease - Some insects and disease can be eradicated with a prescribed burn.

Enhance Appearance - Prescribed burning can improve recreation and aesthetic values, opening up stands and increasing the number of and visibility of flowering annuals and biennials.

Photo Credit: Dale Wade, Rx Fire Doctor, Bugwood.org

FIRE: A PRESCRIPTION FOR FOREST HEALTH & IMPROVEMENT

Prescribed fire is defined as “a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk.” Prescribed fire has been used for centuries. Early settlers observed Native Americans using fire to clear land and reduce forest underbrush, making it easier to travel, hunt game and create better habitat for wildlife. Wildlife and forests have thrived and adapted in the Southeastern U. S. due to the regular use of fire.

Today, forestry professionals continue to use prescribed fire much in the same way. However, we now have a better understanding of forest fuels, weather and different techniques that make fire even more effective.

(Continued)



Photo Credit: David J. Moorhead, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

FIRE: A PRESCRIPTION FOR FOREST HEALTH & IMPROVEMENT

Using today's technology trained professionals can safely burn forest lands without damaging existing, healthy trees and wildlife, with a minimal effect on air quality.

Many Georgia forest landowners recognize prescribed fire as the best way to manage forest lands for wildfire reduction, easy travel through the woods and wildlife habitat. Without the regular use of prescribed fire, several ecosystems in the Southeast would cease to exist.

BURNS MUST BE PLANNED & PERMITTED

Burns should be planned for the right season and weather conditions, and must be permitted with the state. Most understory burning is done during the winter dormant season, when there is typically more acceptable relative humidity, temperature, fuel moisture and steady, persistent winds.

A prescribed burn permit can be obtained through the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and they will also be aware of any outdoor burn bans that may be posted due to dry conditions.

GFC personnel or a privately employed professional forester can help landowners identify the right resources to plan and conduct a prescribed fire. Landowners should verify that a contractor has been trained and certified to plan and conduct a burn, and has an understanding of the importance of smoke management and the landowner's objectives.

For more information about safe burning and burn permits visit www.gatrees.org. GFC offers a Prescribed Fire Certification course for anyone interested in becoming a certified burner. Other sources of information on prescribed burns include:

www.goodfires.org

www.bugwood.org/pfire



Know the Risks

Landowners should be aware of the liability and risks associated with prescribed fire. Detailed planning, including provisions for smoke management, is critical for every burn. Smoke management plans are designed to minimize the public health and environmental impacts of smoke in populated areas due to prescribed fire. Additionally, landowners could be liable when a planned burn on their property impacts the property of adjacent landowners.

Choosing Quality Contractors

Protect your forest and your investment: Don't take shortcuts when choosing a contractor to work on your land, whether you need forest management planning advice, or timber harvesting, tree planting or prescribed burn services.

Professional forestry is a degreed and certified profession. If you need forest management planning or timber harvesting advice, be sure to contact a professional forester – whether a consulting forester, industry forester or government forester. Foresters are registered through the state.

When choosing a logger in Georgia, check to see if they have completed Master Timber Harvester training. This program sponsored by the University of Georgia and the state SFI Implementation Committee ensures that the logger is knowledgeable of sustainable harvesting practices and forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to protect water quality.

Prescribed burn contractors should be trained and certified by the state.

Foresters and state agencies like the Georgia Forestry Commission or the Extension Service can often refer landowners to other forestry contractors for planting, site preparation or other services.

Go to www.gatrees.org for more information on identifying forestry consultants or other contractors or to www.sfi-georgia.org for a list of Master Timber Harvesters in Georgia.

Photo Credit: David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org



Invasive Species Alert: Emerald Ash Borer Beetle



The emerald ash borer beetle, an invasive insect responsible for the death or decline of tens of millions of ash trees in 20 states, was detected in Georgia this year. The emerald ash borer (EAB) is a small, green metallic beetle. It attacks only ash trees and all ash species – including green, white, black and blue – are at risk. Signs of emerald ash borer infestation include a general decline in the appearance of the tree, thinning of upper branches and twigs, loss of leaves, and serpentine tunnels produced by EAB larvae under the bark.

Emerald ash borers are “hitch-hikers”, whose larvae live underneath the bark of ash firewood, hidden from view. People unknowingly give the pest a ride when they move firewood between counties or from home to campsite.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is working with states to prevent its spread and educate the public about this destructive tree pest. While only one percent of Georgia's forested acres contain ash trees, the potential destruction is significant. Some 3 million ash trees are in urban areas and another 2 million acres are in rural settings.

For More Information:

Visit www.gainvasives.org/eab or go to www.gatrees.org and search for forest health alerts and updates.

Photo Credit: David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org



**Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SFI Implementation Committee**

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Georgia Wins SFI Award for Sustainable Homebuilding Project



The Georgia SFI Implementation Committee received SFI's 15th Annual Achievement Award for their ongoing efforts to connect

communities to sustainable forestry in Georgia. Their most recent effort was support for a forestry community Habitat for Humanity homebuilding initiative in Macon that used sustainably sourced wood grown and milled in Georgia. A video documented the homebuilding effort and the growing, nurturing, harvesting, processing and replanting of Georgia's abundant forests for use in consumer products and homes.

To learn about the project:



- Search **"Sustainable Forest: A Georgia Success Story"** on YouTube to view the video



- Search Facebook for **"Georgia Forestry Community Habitat for Humanity Build"**



For More Information about SFI, call 706-542-7691 or log on to www.sfi-georgia.org.

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