In-Tree-Guing Databases
By: John Peterson, Virginia Tech

Many readers of the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update* might recognize me from the last newsletter as Jennifer's husband, the hunter of stink bugs, who was tottering on the very brink of madness. Stink bug hunting is, of course, a free-time pursuit. In my professional life, I work as a Research Technician for the Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation (FREC). While most of my FREC roles are behind the scenes, I am deeply involved with some very public projects that are described below.

First, Virginia Tech Dendrology offers identification information for more than 1,000 North American trees, shrubs and vines. It includes 8,800 images, a clickable map that returns an elevation-sensitive list of possible species, and ID keys to help you identify unknown specimens: http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/factsheets.cfm.

Second, the app version of Virginia Tech Dendrology is available for both iPhone and Android devices. The vTree app can provide a list of oaks that can be found where you are standing, or provide a list of trees you will see on your Glacier National Park vacation. Search "vTree" in the app stores or scroll to the bottom of the page provided above.

Third, the Virginia BIG Trees database provides a listing of the largest (by American Forests' points rules) individual trees in the Commonwealth. Sorry for the digression, but people are so competitive that rules had to be developed to define "big." American Forests awards points based on three measurements: trunk circumference in inches + height in feet + ¼ average crown spread in feet. Trees with the highest score are declared champions, and trees within 5 points of each other are co-champions. While points-awarded big tree champions are generally among the tallest, they are not necessarily the tallest trees. In fact, points-awarded champions are often not the most handsome specimens. You'd be surprised at how many national champions can be found in Virginia. Tree enthusiasts will also be surprised at how much time they can while away here: http://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/.

Finally, if you can pardon the pun, these projects have branched into the new and exciting Superlative Tree Database. The Superlative Tree Database is the result of a fruitful (groan) partnership with Bob Leverett, a co-founder of the Native Tree Society (NTS), and Don Bertolette, founder of the Western Native Tree Society. Both are co-founders of the American Forests National Cadre of expert tree measurers, developers of the American Forests Tree-Measuring Guidelines handbook, and think that vTree and the Virginia Big Tree database are (Don's fault this time) tree-rific !!! Bob, Don, and their teams travel

around the country to verify American Forests points champions and to measure other large tree specimens. They have collected an impressive amount of accurate superlative tree data over the years – and they are eager to share this data with the world. FREC is now hosting the Superlative Tree Database, which means that it is available to the public. This database is new but rapidly growing as the NTS and cadre members submit their data. There is tree-mendous value in these data (again, sorry).

If you are interested answering such questions as: What is the maximum height for yellow-poplar? What state boasts the tallest black birch? Where is the Eastern white pine with the largest girth? How does the size of the black locust in your backfield compare to other black locusts? visit this new database to see if you have any actual bragging rights! http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/NTS/search.cfm.

And, for the record, I've definitely got the stink bugs on the run.

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