

Events Calendar

For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the online events calendar at <https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu>.

SCHEDULED EVENTS - APRIL - JULY 2026			
DATE	LOCATION / DETAILS	EVENT DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
April 29 - May 1	Norfolk Time and cost varies	Virginia Forestry Summit This annual educational event is for natural resource professionals and landowners. Program includes classroom sessions and field trips in Norfolk and surrounding areas.	https://www.vaforestry.org/2026-virginia-forestry-summit
May 7 May 14 May 21	Halifax Farmville Bedford 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM Free	Spring Venture Outdoors This program includes both classroom and field trip sessions. Topics will include: a forest health update (bugs and disease), tree identification, wild game update, and cost share opportunities.	Jason Fisher 434-476-2147 jasonf@vt.edu
May 8 - 9	Abingdon \$60*/person \$120*/couple	Southwest Virginia Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat This introductory-level landowner program will cover the basics of why and how to manage your woods, as well as sources of professional and financial assistance. Onsite lodging is available for an additional \$30/person/night.	Jennifer Gagnon 540-231-6391 jgagnon@vt.edu
May 9	Montpelier Station 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM \$18	Spring Woods Walk Learn about the ecological and economic contributions a well-managed forest provides to our society in terms of habitat, wildlife, wood products, and such basic needs as clean air and water.	https://www.montpelier.org/events/working-woods-walk/
May 27	Online 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM \$10/family	Generation NEXT Webinar: Be Lawyer Ready Legal experts will discuss how to prepare before meeting with a lawyer to discuss legacy planning. Good preparation saves time and money, and helps get the outcomes you want for your land and heirs.	Karen Snape 540-231-6494 ksnape@vt.edu
June 1 - August 2	Online \$55/family	Online Woodland Options for Landowners This 10-week self-paced course teaches the fundamentals of forest management. Upon completion of the program, you can have a draft forest management plan.	Jennifer Gagnon 540-231-6391 jgagnon@vt.edu
June 24 & 25 July 8 & 9	Augusta County New Kent County \$25*	Teaching Trees These 2-day, field-based professional development sessions are for middle and high school teachers. They focus on local ecology, forest management, and sustainable forest products. A lodging stipend is available for those traveling more than an hour round trip.	Ellen Powell ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov
July 24 & 25	Warrenton \$50* for up to 2 people	Generation NEXT Workshop This 1+ day program is for farm and forest owners and includes traditional estate planning as well as family dynamics and goal setting. Learn how you can keep your land intact, in forest and farm, and in family ownership.	Adam Downing 540-948-6881 adowning@vt.edu

*Meal(s) included

ONGOING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Basic Training

Available statewide. Dates, times, and fees vary.

People who are curious about nature, enjoy the outdoors, and want to be a part of natural resource management and conservation in Virginia are perfect candidates to become Virginia Master Naturalists.

Visit www.virginiamasternaturalist.org for a chapter near you.

Fifteen Minutes in the Forest

Online video series. Every 4th Friday at 12:15 pm.

Join Virginia Cooperative Extension's Forestry Team for videos about natural resource-related topics.

Connect/find past videos:

- **YouTube:** https://www.youtube.com/c/VirginiaForest_LandownerEducationProgram

Witness Trees & Independence, *continued from page 1*

Nonetheless, we most assuredly have trees across Virginia that were alive on July 4, 1776. We can confidently say this because we have numerous species in the Old Dominion that can easily live more than 250 years. To have survived this long, they had to have avoided widespread clearing of the region for agriculture, which covered most of the eastern seaboard by the turn of the 19th century, as well as other threats like severe weather, insects, disease, and fire. We are most likely to find them in hard-to-reach places like cliffs and swamps. They might be hard to find and verify, but we have trees around that have witnessed all manner of history.

If you are interested in big and old trees, you may enjoy looking into the Remarkable Trees of Virginia project (<https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/remarkabletree/index.html>) which documents significant trees across the state and is part of the Virginia Big Tree Program (<https://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/>) at Virginia Tech.

Now on to the little-known story that played a role in starting the American Revolution.

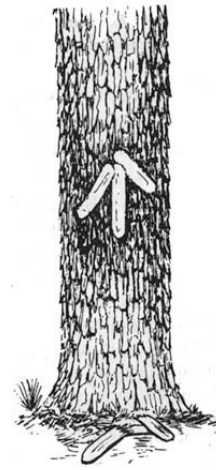
The Tree Party

What do the flags of Maine and Vermont have in common with the Royal Navy and the American Revolution? Hint: it's a tree species that has been called the sequoia of the East.

While not as tall as the sequoias, eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) is the tallest tree species in the eastern United States, and the tallest pine species in North America. White pine growing on good soil can easily exceed 150 feet tall, with the current champion exceeding 180 feet. Even more remarkable, though not verifiable, is that, according to some sources, old-growth white pine in the New England region of Precolonial America may have well exceeded 200 feet. This height, combined with white pine's light weight yet strong wood, leads us to the story behind the state flags bearing this majestic tree and its role in the American Revolution.

Great Britain's Royal Navy once ruled the seas in wooden ships powered by wind. To go farther and faster, taller masts were needed, but England's forest had been cutover several times, leaving little but firewood. By the 17th century, the King was competing with other great empires for ship building material in the Baltic region. Then came knowledge of an abundance of the perfect tree, the white pine! The combination of height, strength, and weight made for perfect masts and was used for many other purposes as well. The pitch and tar from the trees were used for waterproofing and the turpentine was used to make protective finishes.

White pine became a significant export commodity, but the King of England felt that too many of the best trees were being used by the colonists and he feared a



Eastern white pine marked with the King's Broad Arrow were claimed by King George III for use by Great Britain's Royal Navy.

shortage would ensue for his Navy. As such, the Crown revised its Massachusetts Bay Charter in 1691 with a Mast Preservation Clause that stated that all trees 24 inches and larger, one foot above the ground, belonged to the King. Royal surveyors then commenced to mark such trees with the King's Broad Arrow. The colonists grew to resent this act of eminent domain on what they felt was private property and many began to resist. Many pines marked with the King's Broad Arrow were poached and sawn into widths just under 24 inches to spite the law.

This culminated in 1772, a year before the Boston Tea Party, with what came to be called the Pine Tree Riot. Officials in New Hampshire, who were to protect the King's trees, arrested six sawmill owners for possessing and milling the King's trees without a license. One of the owners refused to pay the fine of £100. This sawmiller was released with the agreement he would return the next day with his bail. He did return, with 30-40 friends, all disguised with soot covering their faces. They ran the King's tree police out of town. According to Heather Cox Richardson, Professor of History at Boston College, "While eight of the men were later charged with assault, the local judges who sentenced them let them off so lightly the verdict could easily be seen as support for their actions."

We are a nation and a people based on principle. Many historians regard this act of rebellion every bit as important in launching the fight for independence as the Boston Tea Party. I think these rioters had at least one thing right, that our trees should be used to meet our needs as a society. Thankfully, we won our independence and we still have the majestic eastern white pine and other species continuing as rich natural resources unique to our great country. A thank you to our forefathers who fought for and obtained the independence we now enjoy.

Happy Birthday Uncle Sam!

Adam Downing is the Northwest District Extension Agent, adowning@vt.edu, 540-948-6881.

Focus on Managing Virginia's Hardwood Forests

by Joe Rossetti, Virginia Department of Forestry

Almost 80% of Virginia's forests are classified as either hardwood or mixed hardwood and pine forests. In 2021, the Hardwood Initiative started in earnest to put greater emphasis on good hardwood management. The Hardwood Initiative has been growing ever since with the goal of improving Virginia's hardwood forests through intentional management. This goal has been the focus of many Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) and Virginia Cooperative Extension efforts. Five years in, it's a good time to pause and look at some of the activities that have taken place through the Initiative.

First, forestry leaders engaged in hardwood management from DOF, Extension, other state and federal agencies, forestry consulting, the logging industry, non-profit organizations, wood product manufacturers, and landowners meet on a regular basis to consider the needs of hardwood forests and those who own them. This group generates goals and strategies to address specific concerns for hardwood forests. Virginians are fortunate to have this group of generous and dedicated forestry leaders.

Second, although trees behave the same way they have for many thousands of years, our understanding of them has changed. As such, DOF and Extension have offered numerous trainings to bring the latest information on hardwood management to forestry professionals. Foresters, loggers, and forestry contractors have participated in these trainings over the years to learn about managing and improving Virginia's hardwood forests.

Third, when the Hardwood Initiative started, it was difficult for landowners and foresters to find contractors they could hire to help with their hardwood management needs. Now, dozens of contractors are engaged in some aspect of hardwood management across the state. Some operate statewide while others are regional, working in several counties near their home. While there are still opportunities for additional forestry contractors, there are now enough to do much of the work landowners want completed.

Fourth, demonstration sites have been established for popular hardwood management practices including crop tree release, precommercial thinning, and midstory management. Some demonstration sites include other practices, such as prescribed burning, timber harvesting, commercial thinning, and invasive plant control. Most demonstrations have been done by contractors at an operational scale. These demonstration sites have been very valuable, as they helped locate and develop contractors, gave foresters a chance to practice what they learned about hardwood management, provided places for training for forestry professionals, and served as informative field sites for landowner education. Most demonstration sites are



Virginia Department of Forestry

Landowners interested in managing their hardwood forests can work with their Virginia Department of Forestry Area Forester. Photo by Corey Turner, Virginia Department of Forestry.

located on state forests and wildlife management areas, though some are on other state-owned lands, including Virginia Tech's McCormick Farm, the Shenandoah Valley Agriculture Research and Extension Center.

Fifth, in September 2021, the DOF began offering cost share to help landowners implement hardwood management practices. Landowners can apply for financial assistance to perform nine hardwood management practices through the Hardwood Initiative Cost Share Program. Interested landowners will work with their DOF Area Forester or trained Consulting Forester. The forester will assess the property, recommend practices, and start the cost share application process. Foresters will provide specific guidance and prescriptions to tailor practices to the unique needs of each forest. Look on the DOF website for more information on the Hardwood Initiative Cost Share Program (<https://dof.virginia.gov/forest-management-health/landowner-assistance/financial-assistance-programs/hardwood-initiative-cost-share-program/>).

Last, but not least, outreach and education for woodland owners is another goal of the Hardwood Initiative, but implementation has been slower. Outreach and landowner education has been happening to be sure; landowners participating in a Woods and Wildlife conference, Fall Forestry and Wildlife Field Tour, Landowner Retreat, or other Extension program have heard the message about improving hardwood forests through intentional management. The next stage of the Hardwood Initiative will include more outreach through these efforts to present hardwood management topics.

—Hardwoods, continued on page 5.

Growing and Protecting Forests

by Joe Rossetti, Virginia Department of Forestry



Well-managed hardwood forests will help family woodland owners meet their ownership goals. These may include having healthy trees of desirable species, adequate regeneration, quality wildlife habitat, and minimal problems with invasive species. Photo by: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech.

Virginia's hardwood forests are a great resource. They are beautiful, productive, valuable, and extensive. The forests we have today are a result of past management activities. Landowners, foresters, loggers, contractors, educators, and others need to work together again to improve Virginia's hardwood forests through intentional management.

Table 1. Cost share rates for management practices in the Hardwood Initiative Cost Share Program.

Management Practice*	Hardwood Initiative Cost Share per Acre
Crop Tree Release	\$171
Precommercial Thinning	\$225
Midstory Management	\$225
Cull Tree Control	\$225
Other Timber Stand Improvement	\$180
Prescribed Burning	\$36
Prescribed Burn Prep	\$90
Invasive Species Control	\$270
Stand Marking	\$81
*Your DOF forester can explain each of these practices and recommend which ones are right for your hardwood forest. Find your forester: www.dof.virginia.gov	

Joe Rossetti is the Hardwood Initiative Coordinator, joe.rossetti@dof.virginia.gov, 540-359-1693.

New opportunities for landowners are available from the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF). The DOF recently launched the Growing and Protecting Forests (GAP) and Diminished Species Establishment Cost Share Programs to assist landowners with managing their forests. With these additional opportunities, DOF is now able to cost share nearly all forest management practices.

GAP Cost Share

GAP cost share is designed to:

- Help family woodland owners manage their privately owned pine forests
- Help local governments manage publicly owned forests (pine or hardwood)

The cost share rate is 70% of the landowner's management costs, not to exceed specific per-acre maximums which vary by management practice. The practices are the same as those listed in Table 1 of the companion article in this newsletter, *Focus on Managing Virginia's Hardwood Forests*, but the per-acre rates are different. The per-acre maximum rates are being updated and will be available on the DOF website soon. DOF will begin accepting applications in April for 2026-2027. Landowners interested in completing forest management activities eligible for cost share are encouraged to apply. Landowners can apply through their local DOF area forester or trained consulting foresters.

Diminished Species Cost Share

Tree species that were once more common in Virginia are referred to as diminished species. Restoring diminished species to the landscape is good for forest diversity and ecology, resilience, and wildlife habitat. DOF is now able to provide landowners with cost share money to establish American (or hybrid) chestnut, shortleaf pine, and red spruce. All three species are diminished from historic levels for different reasons and are worthy of restoration efforts. Each species has different needs and limitations, so they are not all appropriate everywhere. More information will be available on the DOF website soon, but the basics are:

- American (or hybrid) chestnut can be planted in the western half of Virginia. DOF is limiting each planting to about 1 acre.
- Red spruce is adapted to colder microclimates, so it can be planted on suitable sites in limited areas of western Virginia.
- Shortleaf pine is native statewide and adapted to many growing conditions.

DOF is looking forward to helping landowners improve their existing forests and restore diminished native tree species. Please reach out to your Area Forester for assistance.

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE

Spring 2026



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Department of Forest Resources &
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Blacksburg, VA 24061

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434-977-6555
www.dof.virginia.gov



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**Virginia Tech Department of Forest
Resources & Environmental Conservation
and Virginia Cooperative Extension**
228 Cheatham Hall 0324
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-6391
<https://frec.vt.edu/>



**USDA Forest Service
Forest Stewardship Program**
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20250
212-205-0929
[www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/
forest-stewardship](http://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-stewardship)



Virginia Forestry Association
3808 Augusta Ave.
Richmond, VA 23230
804-278-8733
www.vaforestry.org



Virginia Sustainable Forestry Initiative SIC
804-278-8733
<http://virginiasfi.org/>



Virginia Tree Farm Foundation
757-354-6721
www.vtff.org

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