

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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Don Ashley and Theo Meadows of Ashley Farms Awarded 2020 Jon Gould Florida Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year

By Ginger Morgan, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Mr. Don Ashley and his sister, Ms. Theo Meadows, have transitioned their 570-acre multi-generational tobacco farm into a showcase of sustainable multiple-use management and habitat diversity in Madison County. A visit to Ashley Farms elicits awe of the family's hard work to implement forestry practices that involve timber production and reforestation while improving wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, and recreational opportunities. In recognition of their efforts, Ashley Farms has been selected as the 2020 Jon Gould Florida Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year and serves as a model for encouraging other landowners to become great land stewards of their forests.

In 1962, Ashley Farms' began growing shade tobacco for use in wrapping cigars. Today, Mr. Ashley can describe their land's history of where each tobacco field was

located, where paths crossed to transport their harvests, and where the drying barns once stood. Walking towards an old pond, Mr. Ashley can even share the location of an old fishing spot where he caught a big bass but has long dried out and a neighbor's house now sits.

The Ashleys stopped growing tobacco in the mid-1970's. As with any property, landowners are sometimes faced with modifying their land management objectives due to current economic and personal situations. After the Ashley's tobacco crops were no longer farmed, they decided to transition into planting pine trees and became a certified in the American Tree Farm System in 1984. Ashley Farms is now a diverse land of pine plantations, woodlands, wildlife food plots/openings, and integrated corn fields. The property operates with multiple-use

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An Equal Opportunity Institution.



Don Ashley and his wife Tamara, photo by David Lewis



(L) Don Ashley (right) with Dave Lewis (left) at 2007 Forest Steward of the Year tour, photo by Kris Cathey. (R) Theo and Steve Meadows.

objectives for timber, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, recreation, and aesthetics in a sustainable manner.

Ashley Farms' ability to achieve sustainable practices was developed through Mr. Ashley's and Mrs. Meadows' relationships with community, friends, natural resources professionals, and especially with their consulting forester, Dave Lewis of Southern Forestry Consultants. Dave began working with Don, Theo and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Ashley, over 25 years ago and is proud to have them recognized for their hard work. Dave first guided Ashley Farms in 1992 using their existing management plan, written by Jim Buckner which laid out an activity schedule to achieve their property's goals. Throughout the years, Dave has appreciated Mr. Ashley's flexibility in his thinking, a concept called adaptive management. Mr. Ashley has learned from the surrounding agricultural community that growing timber is a means of farming which can be affected by factors such as weather, markets, regulations, and other variables that are mostly out of his

control. Dave attributes part of the Ashleys' success to the fact they are great at "rolling with the punches" and are not inclined to complain or point fingers. Dave says, "Mr. Ashley takes management obstacles in stride, just as he has done in other aspects of his life, by making the best of things." Mr. Ashley's flexibility allows Dave the freedom to keep Ashley Farms positioned in a way to take advantage of changing markets and technology and to manage for a diverse forest that integrates timber, wildlife, recreation, agriculture, and conservation.

From the plan that Dave developed, Don and Theo took the initiative to perform over 80% of the day-to-day management work themselves. For the larger, more complex projects such as timber sales, prescribed burning, site preparation and tree planting, they rely on the advice and extra manpower from their forestry consultant and independent contractors. Ashley Farms is very open to listening to professional advice and asking the right questions to seek answers on what they don't know.

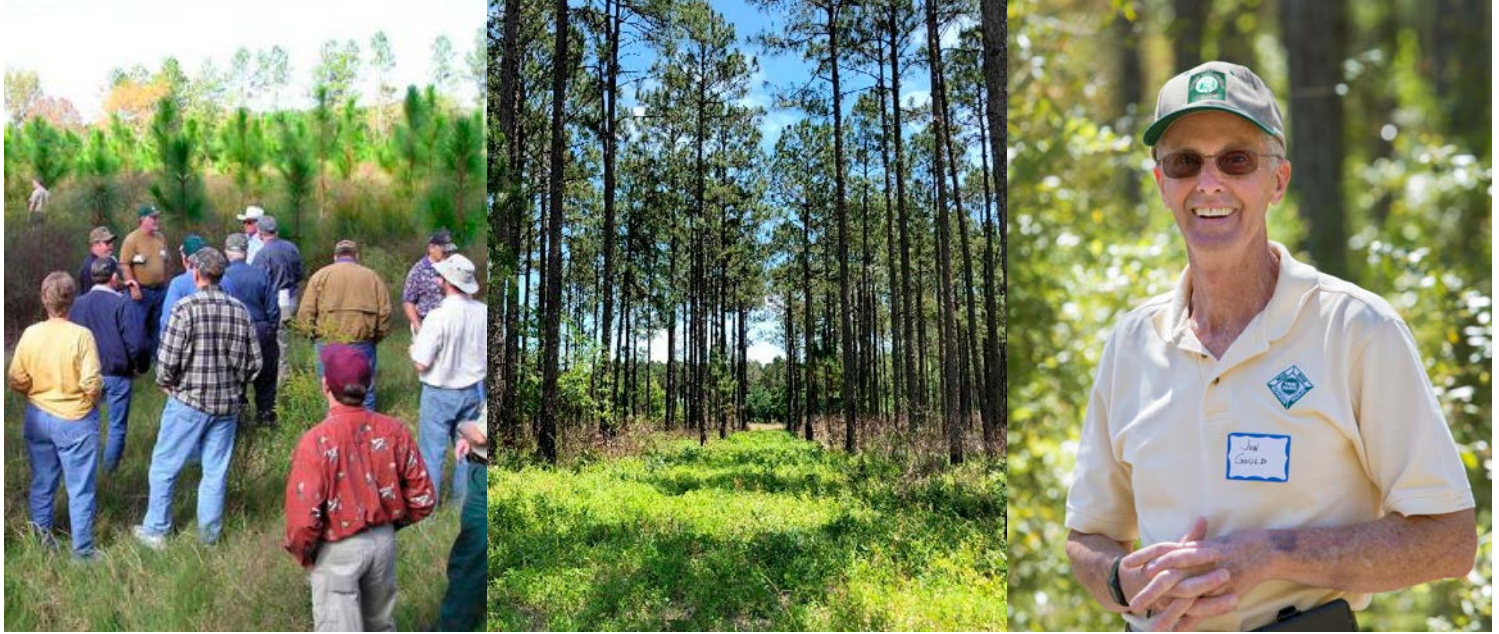
Typical forestry practices at Ashley Farms include reforestation, thinning, and salvage cuts as needed to control southern pine beetle outbreaks. Mr. Ashley prefers to reforest with longleaf pines on appropriate sites. Mr. Ashley understands that prescribed fire is important in managing a healthy forest and how fire in an ecosystem benefits wildlife, so they have increased their burning activity, starting with 54 acres in 2014 to over 123 acres in 2019. Additional forest management practices include annual disking of fire lines along with understory chemical and mechanical treatment to reduce competitive hardwoods and remove invasive plant species such as Chinaberry and Japanese climbing fern.

Wildlife management at Ashley Farm's focuses on game species such as northern bobwhite, wild turkey, waterfowl and white-tailed deer. Active management for these species also benefits non-game species such as squirrels and songbirds. Mr. Ashley remembers

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Prescribed fire is used to improve wildlife habitat and reduce wildfire risk, photo by Chris Demers.



(L) Landowners learn about longleaf pine at a tour of Ashley Farms in 2007, photo by Kris Cathey. (C) Openings in the forest are used to provide supplemental food for wildlife, photo by Zach Butler. (R) Jon Gould, photo by Tyler Jones.

planting small groves of oak trees for the wildlife with his dad for purposes of benefitting wildlife and is proud to show off those trees when visiting the property. He is also proud to show off the Cypress trees planted many years ago around the banks of wetter areas to prevent erosion. Ultimately, these practices increase species diversity and the family's ability to enjoy wildlife viewing and recreational hunting.

Not only is Ashley Farms a great Tree Farm, but their family is also well-respected in the community. Mr. Ashley is involved with hosting local community groups to learn about the environment, providing field tours for the Forest Stewardship Program, participating with the Madison County Landowner Group, and serving on the Board of Directors for the Madison County National Wild Turkey Federation.

Ashley Farms is recognized by many for doing a great job of balancing many different objectives while maintaining aesthetic values; being one of the most diverse properties managed by Southern Forestry Consultants. The Ashley family's ability to adapt to

management guidance, manage for a diverse forest, and be actively engaged with taking care of the land are keys to the property's success. Primarily, Mr. Lewis says it is this type of active engagement that he's observed over his 30-year tenure as a forestry consultant that contributes most to a landowner completing their land management objectives. Ashley Farms is a prime example of how actively engaged landowners achieve their goals.

Throughout their 36 years of being a certified Tree Farm, Ashley Farms has stood firmly in their desire to be great land managers by enrolling in the Forest Stewardship Program in 1993 and then being awarded the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Florida State Forest Stewardship Landowner of the Year Award in 2007. Since 1984, Ashley Farms continues to exemplify the Tree Farm Program values of sustainable management of water, wildlife, wood, and recreation and well-deserves to receive current recognition as the 2020 Jon Gould Florida Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year.

To learn more about sustainable forestry and how to become a certified Tree Farm in Florida, please visit <http://floridaforest.org/programs/florida-tree-farm/>

Author's Note

Florida's Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award honors the memory and legacy of Mr. Jon Gould, a respected member of Florida's Tree Farm Program State Committee and a proud Tree Farmer and advocate for forestry for more than 30 years throughout the southeast. Mr. Gould was selected as the Florida Tree Farmer of the Year in 2006 and as the Southern Regional Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year in 2018. Sadly, Mr. Gould recently passed; however, his legacy lives as an ultimate model of the Tree Farm Program for which the Florida award is now renamed beginning in 2020. Learn more about Jon, his wife Carol and the Gould Tree Farm at: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/south-nominee-goulds>

Welcome Dr. Marcus Lashley, Wildlife Extension Faculty at UF/IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation



Dr. Marcus Lashley joins the UF/IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation.

Dr. Marcus Lashley recently joined the faculty in the UF/IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology. He grew up with a love for hunting and fishing in Alabama and worked on a farm throughout high school. These experiences fostered his passion for wildlife management and led him to pursue a career in wildlife conservation. He earned a

bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Forestry and Wildlife Management. His M.Sc. thesis research at the University of Tennessee focused on the effects of forest management practices and warm-season food plots on habitat quality for white-tailed deer and wild turkey in upland hardwood forest. He then worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for a year as a wildlife biologist managing game species habitat and populations on public lands in northern Florida before moving on to a Ph.D. program at North Carolina State University. His dissertation focused on the effects of prescribed fire regimes on habitat quality for deer and turkey in the longleaf pine ecosystem. He expanded that research to understand the role of fire regimes in predator-prey interactions between coyotes and deer, turkeys, and fox squirrels during his postdoc in North Carolina.

Dr. Lashley started his own research, teaching, and extension programs at Mississippi State University where he was on faculty for four years. While in this position at Mississippi State, Dr. Lashley continued to focus research efforts on understanding the use of forest management practices and prescribed fire to improve habitat in forest, savanna, and grassland communities for deer, turkey, northern bobwhite,

and gopher tortoises. He also led research to understand the ecological effects of invasive species such as wild pigs and nonnative plants. He played a key role in outreach in the MSU Deer Lab disseminating research through popular articles, extension documents, social media, and the Deer University podcast.

At the University of Florida, Dr. Lashley is in the process of establishing, and will direct, the Disturbance Ecology and Ecological Restoration Lab (i.e., UF D.E.E.R. Lab). The lab will feature a website and social media pages sharing the latest research in wildlife conservation, disturbance ecology, and habitat management. Also, Dr. Lashley recently received funding to create a podcast network called Natural Resources University that will house five podcasts related to the science of natural resource management with plans to launch in fall, 2020. The network will include podcasts focused on habitat management and fisheries management (both housed at Purdue), gamebird management (housed at Iowa State), and fire ecology (i.e., Fire University; housed in UF D.E.E.R. Lab). With an appointment in all three pillars of the land grant mission, Dr. Lashley will teach classes and provide technical guidance to landowners of Florida on wildlife conservation and wildlife habitat management, and conduct research on wildlife conservation and habitat management to support these programs. He currently has two graduate students in the lab working on the effects of invasive species and one student working on fire-wildlife-plant interactions.

For more information please contact Dr. Lashley via email at IFAS-WEC-UFDEERLAB@ad.ufl.edu.

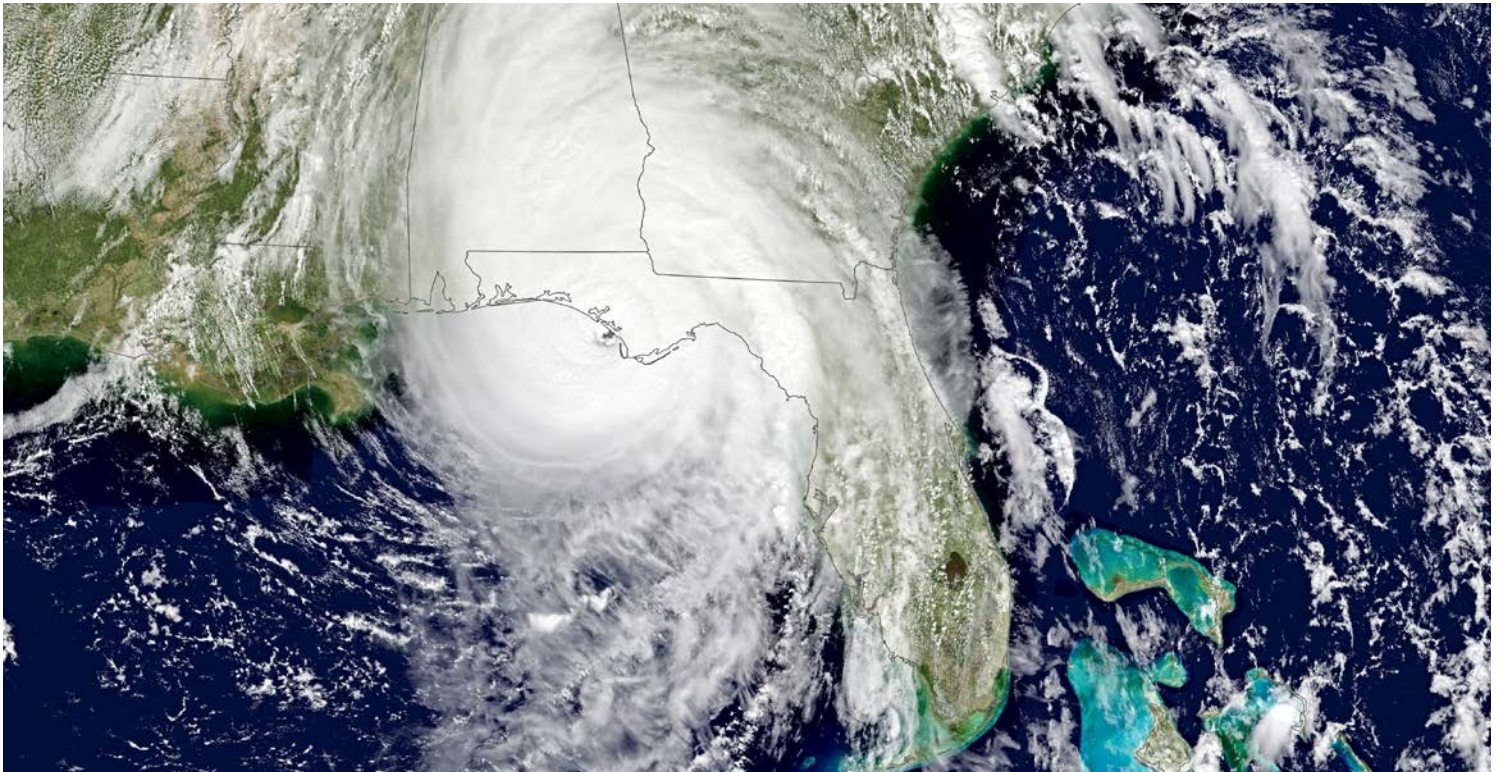


(L) Gopher tortoise, photo by Bill Boothe. (R) White-tailed deer in a pine forest, photo by Jon Gould.

Don't miss out on news and events!

Sign up for the regular updates! Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the email listserv. Florida Land Steward email updates are sent once a week or every other week and include the latest calendar of workshops, tours and other events; a link to the current issue of this quarterly newsletter; updates on cost-share and other assistance programs, opportunities, and resources; and other stewardship related news and information.

All the latest news and events are online at the new UF Florida Land Steward Program web site: <https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-land-steward/>



Hurricane Michael. NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens, using data from GOES-16.

Emergency Forest Restoration Deadline for Hurricane Michael Extended Through October 30, 2020

The USDA Florida Farm Service Agency State Committee has authorized an additional six-month extension to the **Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) and Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** late filed period. This allows producers impacted by Hurricane Michael to apply for assistance under EFRP and/or ECP and be considered timely if application is made by the new deadline of October 30, 2020. Details on these and other disaster assistance programs is at Contact your local USDA FSA office to set up an appointment. Find your local USDA Service Center at <https://offices.sc.gov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

Hurricane Michael State Block Grant Sign-up to be Announced Soon

The State of Florida and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have announced the successful end of negotiations on the administration of \$380.7 million in grant funding to help Florida's timber industry recover following Hurricane Michael in 2018. It is expected that timber producers could begin to receive funding as soon as this fall. We will post information on the sign-up for this assistance, when it is available, in the Florida Land Steward email updates. Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to this service.

TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

The timber price information below is useful for observing trends over time, but does not reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale are advised to solicit the services of a consulting forester to obtain current local market conditions.

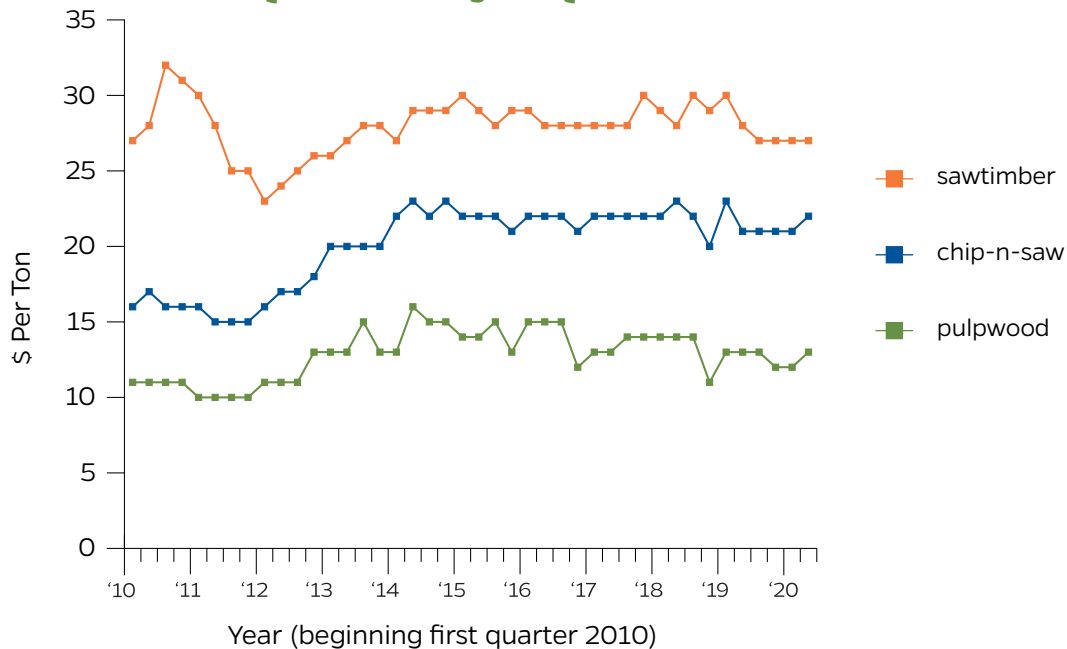
Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **2nd Quarter 2020** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices	
Pine pulpwood:	\$13/ton, ↑ from 1 st Qtr. 2020
Pine C-N-S:	\$22/ton, ↑
Pine sawtimber:	\$27/ton, same

Trend Report

Due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall average trend was down for timber stumpage prices across the region. However, Florida saw some modest increases, on average, for pine pulpwood and chip-n-saw prices. This was likely attributable to continued wet weather across much of the state. The average stumpage price of sawtimber has held fast at around \$27/ton as the regional overall trend for the gate price of that product has remained flat for over a year. Market conditions were volatile for most wood products early in the second quarter, but improved later in the quarter as the overall economy shifted from contraction to growth. As of this writing the USDA and FDACS have approved the \$380 million in block grants for Hurricane Michael disaster recovery. We will share information on the sign-up period for that funding, and a lot of other news and opportunities, in the Florida Land Steward email updates. Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to that service if you do not receive the email updates. Updates are sent once a week or every other week. This is the best way to stay current on news, opportunities, and events.

Average Pine Stumpage Prices for Florida (\$/Ton)
1st Qtr 2010 through 2nd Qtr 2020



Timber Mart-South is compiled and produced at the Center for Forest Business, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, under contract with the Frank W. Norris Foundation, a non-profit corporation serving the forest products industry. See <http://www.tmart-south.com/> for information on subscriptions.

CONGRATULATIONS

CERTIFIED FOREST STEWARDS AND TREE FARMERS

More information about certification in these programs is available at:

<https://www.fdacs.gov/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/Forest-Stewardship-Program>

<https://www.treefarmssystem.org/florida>

<https://myfwc.com/lap>

These landowners have achieved certification in the Tree Farm, Forest Stewardship, Forces Forest, and/or Wildlife Habitat Recognition Program and demonstrate excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Beau Rodrique, Escambia County



Brad Sullivan, Escambia County



Neighbors Jeff Ishee and Devin Simmons, Escambia County



Ted Hassebrock, Escambia County



Jack and Cathy Ewel, Alachua County



Jason, Bethany, Emma, Sarah, and Hannah Holley, Santa Rosa County



Matt Greene (L) and Jason Ballard, Putnam County



Nicholas and Joanne Mancini, Marion County



Sam and Drema Howard, Marion County

Upcoming Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
Aug. 18	Forestry & Natural Resource Webinar: Inventory and Design Opportunities for Pollinator Habitat on Working Lands. 2:00 pm ET. See http://www.conservationwebinars.net/webinars/inventory-and-design-opportunities-for-pollinator-habitat-on-working-lands?sr=wp-mkt-whenPub for details and to join the webinar.
Aug. 20	Southern Fire Exchange Webinar: Northern Bobwhites & Fire: A Perfect Match. 1:00 - 2:00 pm. See https://ufl.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2uMrdSGDQ4-AOmG6bt-7sg to register.
Aug. 24-27	Introductory Training in Geographic Information Systems. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension and Florida Sea Grant. See http://www.flseagrant.org/education/gis-training/ for details and registration.
Aug. 26	AgrAbility Webinar: Roots of the Soil: Strategies and Resources for Succession Planning. 3:00 to 4:00 pm ET. Provided by the USDA NIFA National AgrAbility Project. See https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3azPEqVpUxvWjz for registration.
Aug 28-29	5th Annual Rural and Limited Resources Landowner Online Symposium. Provided by the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation. Education, technical assistance and access to available programs and resources are the keys to success. \$20 fee. See https://whova.com/portal/registration/lando1_202008/ to register.
Sept. 1-3	Florida Forestry Association Annual Meeting. Omni Amelia Island Resort, 39 Beach Lagoon Road, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034. See link above for details and registration. Register early, risk free. The Association will provide full refunds on registrations cancelled on or before August 27 due to health or travel concerns related to COVID-19. Details at https://community.flforestry.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?alias=2020AnnualMeeting
Sept. 16	Woodland Owner Lunch and Learn Webinar: Seedling Genetics and Soil Fertility - know what you are planting and how to care for it. 12:00 pm ET. See http://www.forestrywebinars.net/webinars/woodland-owner-lunch-and-learn-seedling-genetics-and-soil-fertility-know-what-you-are-planting-and-how-to-care-for-it/?sr=wp-upcoming for details and to join the webinar.
Oct. 27-30	Aquatic Weed Control Short Course. Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, 11775 Heron Bay Boulevard, Coral Springs, FL 33076, and streaming live to remote host locations. Provided by UF/IFAS Extension. Join us for the largest and most inclusive training for Florida Pesticide Licensing and CEUs. Become a more qualified professional, engage with your industry, and network with your peers. The course is designed to benefit both new and experienced applicators alike. See https://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/aw/registration-information.html or contact Dr. Lyn Gettys, 954-577-6331, lgettys@ufl.edu

On Demand

2020 Virtual Perennial Peanut Field Day. The UF/IFAS North FL REC Forage Team is sharing their ongoing work on perennial peanut and related forage issues through videos from the field. These videos are available on demand at <http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/phag/2020/06/26/2020-virtual-perennial-peanut-field-day/>.

Upcoming Forestry & Natural Resource Webinars:
<http://www.forestrywebinars.net/>

Upcoming Southern Fire Exchange Webinars
http://www.southernfireexchange.org/Web_Event/Webinars.html

More events and information are posted at floridalandsteward.org

The Florida Land Steward Newsletter is joint project of the UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, US Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Florida Tree Farm Program:

Chris Demers (editor)
UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation
(352) 846-2375 • cdemers@ufl.edu

Dr. Michael Andreu (co-editor)
UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources & Conservation
(352) 846-0355 • mandreu@ufl.edu

Tony Grossman (co-editor)
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
(850) 410-5268
Anthony.Grossman@myfwc.com

John Nash (co-editor)
Florida Tree Farmer
osceolapines@gmail.com

Jen Tucker-Jenks (co-editor)
Florida Forest Service
(850) 681-5874
JenniferTucker-Jenks@fdacs.gov