



Prescribed Fire Newsletter

Second Quarter 2020



Benefit of Growing Season Burn

The southeastern ecosystem is naturally adapted to fire during the growing season. Longleaf pine have adapted to frequent fire disturbances by protecting itself throughout life stages. Dense, long thick needles protect the bud or candle during the grass stage. While thick bark insulates mature trees against heat from flames. Historically, fires would ignite during spring and summer months via thunderstorms spreading between water drainages.. Today, prescribed fire is utilized by burn professionals under predetermined conditions and extinguished at man made or natural fire breaks. Most species in the Longleaf ecosystem have naturally adapted to fire and require it for survival.

Growing season burns are one way landowners can reduce woody vegetation in a pine stand. This is because growing season burns are conducted while vegetation is growing and energy is being used by plants. While woody vegetation is actively growing, it has limited energy reserved in the root system making resprouting difficult.

Growing season fire also encourages seed germination for native grasses and forbs. Native grasses are vital for a variety of wildlife species for food and cover. Bunch grasses are one type of native grass found in growing season burned areas. This particular type of grass is necessary for game species such as turkey and quail.

Once heavy fuel loads have been reduced through the use of dormant season burns, growing season burn rotations should be conducted in a 2-3 year rotation promoting native vegetation and reducing woody vegetation.

For more information: *A Pictorial Comparison of Seasonal Timing and Frequency of Prescribed Fire in Longleaf Pine Stands.*



Brown Spot Needle Blight

What is Brown Spot Needle Blight?

It is a fungus that, in the south, only grows on Longleaf pine seedlings. It can defoliate the grass stage longleaf pine. After this happens a few times, it can eventually kill the young pines. Older trees can also have needle blight but are more resilient to the defoliation. The damage is most pronounced in less mature trees.

How can Brown Spot be Identified?

Landowners can identify Brown Spot Needle Blight by the oval shaped brown spots on the needles of a longleaf seedling. The fungus can spread to the entire needle but leaves the bud intact and healthy.

How does Brown Spot Spread?

It is a fungus spread by spores blowing in the wind or by the splash of rain drops from nearby infected pines.

How can Brown Spot be controlled?

The best control method of brown spot is prescribed fire. A regular burn every 2 or 3 years will burn the dead needles and kill the fungus from the infected trees. If prescribed fire is not an option, a fungicide can be implemented in order to kill the disease. While spraying the infected trees with a chemical from a licensed chemical applicator is an effective approach, landowners should be aware that it could be a costly method if there is a lot of acreage to spray. An alternative to burning and to chemical treatment that has been developed in the recent years, is the use of brown spot needle blight resistant seedlings. Purchasing and planting blight resistant trees could be one of the most proactive long-term measures to ensure that this fungus doesn't become a problem in the first place.





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Upcoming Opportunities

- Certified Burn Manager Class, Auburn University, July 7-10, 2020, Cost \$150
Location: 602 Duncan Drive, Auburn University, Auburn, AL
Registration: <http://forestry.alabama.gov/Pages/Fire/BurnManager.aspx>
- Free Longleaf Pine Seminar, Autaugaville Ag Center, July 23, 2020
Location: Autaugaville Ag Center, Autauga County
Registration: <https://www.alaforestry.org/events>
- Certified Burn Manager Class, Alabama Fire College, August 11-14, 2020, Cost \$150
Location: 2501 Phoenix Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL
Registration: <http://forestry.alabama.gov/Pages/Fire/BurnManager.aspx>

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