



# PRESCRIBED FIRE NEWSLETTER

2021

## upcoming events >>>

Monroe County Annual Forestry Tour  
October 21, 2021  
Location: Peterman, AL  
Register: 251-743-2587 ext. 3

2021 ANRC Alabama Landowners  
Conference  
October 21-22, 2021  
Location: Columbiana, AL  
Register: [alaforestry.org/events](http://alaforestry.org/events)

Fall Landowner Tour  
November 3, 2021  
Location: Autauga County  
Register: Mathew Sorrells (334) 239-5258

Brown Spot Needle Blight of Loblolly Pine  
December 15, 2021  
Location: Virtual Webinar  
Register: Bence Carter [jbc0057@aces.edu](mailto:jbc0057@aces.edu)

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## Important Numbers

To Obtain a Burning Permit:  
(800) 392-5679


For fire weather resources visit:  
[www.forestry.alabama.gov/Pages/Fire/  
Burn\\_Weather.aspx](http://www.forestry.alabama.gov/Pages/Fire/Burn_Weather.aspx)



## Value of Sweetgum

Sweetgum tree is generally not a favored tree in the eyes of landowners. In fact, the majority of landowners in Alabama will openly declare their hatred for them. The widespread disdain for these trees is rooted in several facets of the species. First, they are extremely prolific. They stump sprout seemingly overnight, and tend to seed-in from long distances. In addition, sweetgum trees are extremely fast growing. This quickly becomes problematic as the trees tend to outgrow and then shade out more desirable trees. Sweetgum also have very little wildlife value to them when compared to other species like white oak or persimmon. Finally, if all of these were not reason enough, anyone who has stepped on a sweetgum ball without shoes on will quickly spurn every appearance of the species and cut down any tree, sapling, or seedling that arises on their property.

So naturally, the question often arises when landowners are discussing the issue with Foresters and Consultants, “What good are

the sweetgum?” Ironically, as much as this species has been viewed as a delinquent with no merit to its name, there is actually at least one virtue to these trees—their significant monetary value. Though we do not see specialty high-end furniture being made of sweetgum, the tree does provide hardwood pulp. Due to their speed in growth and reproduction, they can generate substantial volumes of hardwood pulpwood. In certain markets, hardwood pulpwood can bring almost double what pine pulpwood brings. As crazy as it sounds, a sweetgum tree that meets the specifications for hardwood pulpwood can be twice as valuable as a pine pulpwood tree. While markets are constantly changing and this may not always be the case, in current timber market, there is benefit in the presence of the sweetgum tree. This may not change personal feelings about a sweetgum tree in the yard, but knowing there is some value to the trees may make them a little less of a nuisance. 



## Firebreak Management

Firebreaks are used during prescribed fire as a predetermined boundary to stop flame spread. These can be natural or man made. Firebreaks are designed to remove fuel, thus minimizing flame intensity which in turn extinguishes the flame. Firebreaks are vital during a prescribed burn, and whether permanent or temporary, require routine maintenance to operate as designed. Several management practices can aid or widen the lines created by dozers, disks, roads or fields. Some nontraditional methods include mowing, herbicide application, or using a leaf blower.

Green vegetation is commonly used to control erosion along roads or in fields. If green vegetation is an appropriate firebreak, mowing along the inside edge is often an easy practice to improve a firebreak. Mowing grass to 1-4 inches tall will widen the buffer along the break, reducing flame length, which will extend the width of the break. This reduces flame height on the edges reducing chances of the fire jumping. Mowing the grass instead of plowing will also help reduce erosion as well

as provide a food source for wildlife.

If lines have been established for a long period of time, applying herbicides along outside edges will remove encroaching vegetation. For example, spraying Triclopyr to control overhanging woody vegetation such as yaupon will reduce flame intensity making it easier to contain the flame. This practice works well with other species as well such as cogongrass or wax myrtle. This will also improve road conditions by allowing sunlight to reach ground level, drying the road.

Another method that works well for fine fuel removal such as leaves or needles is a leaf blower. Easily carried by hand or on the back, blowers can remove litter without disturbing soil, which in turn reduces soil erosion on sandy sites. Blowers can be easily taken into places not accessible by machines. When a firebreak needs to be tied into a creek or on a steep slope, do not hesitate to crank a blower to remove fuels or widen an existing firebreak.

Next time while pondering how to improve a firebreak be creative and think beyond the plow or dozer line. 🌱

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