

Our Family's Tree Farm



By Steve McWilliams

Working Forests

I am a tree farmer.

I plant trees upon my land
And tend them as they grow.
My working forests take no rest,
They are always set on 'GO'.

They clean our air and water, too,
They are home to furry friends.
Their branches host all sorts of birds;
Their giving never ends.

They make the seeds for next year's trees,
They shade us from the sun.
They give us wood to build our homes;
Their work is never done.

And when we need to get away
When trouble closes in,
We walk among our friends, the trees,
And find some peace again.

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Hi!

Our names are Carrie Ann, Carlie Beth, and Callie Grace. We like spending time with Amma and Pop Pop, our Mama's parents, on the family tree farm in Pulaski County, Georgia.



You can see where we are located on the map to the left...



Growing Deeper

Tree Farm: a privately owned forest that is managed for the owner's enjoyment and that helps the environment, provides many wood-related products, and creates jobs in the community

Most of our 2,200 acre farm is in trees. But we also grow peanuts, cotton, and hay.



We even raise cattle!



Growing Deeper

It is estimated that there are almost 500,000 family tree farms of various sizes in Georgia. In fact, trees cover nearly two-thirds of our state... *23 million acres!*

Acre: a unit of measuring land; about the size of a football field

Our tree farm has been in the family for more than 200 years. Today, Amma and her brother, our Uncle Johnny, manage the farm together.



The entire family pitches in and helps with different chores on the farm.



Trees give us wood for building homes and for hundreds of paper products, including the books we like to read.



They clean our air and make oxygen that we need to live. Trees stop erosion of soil into streams, protecting fish and other aquatic life.



Growing Deeper

Erosion: the movement of topsoil, the most fertile layer of soil, by water and wind.

Aquatic: refers to plants and animals that are found in and around bodies of water, like lakes, rivers, ponds, and wetlands

Our forests make Georgia one of the greenest states in the country. They are also the reason that Georgia is the nation's number one forestry state.



Trees form forests that are good living places, or habitats, for wildlife like deer, foxes, gopher tortoises, fox squirrels, ducks, bobwhite quail, doves and many other types of birds.



Our farm even attracts a large population of wild turkeys.



Growing Deeper

Forest: a large or small area of land that contains mostly trees

Habitat: the natural home of a plant or animal that provides food, water, shelter and space

Georgia's forests are home to many interesting creatures, including white-tailed deer, eastern wild turkey, bobwhite quail, black bear, fox squirrel, red fox, red-tailed hawk, indigo snake, gopher tortoise, bald eagle, great horned owl and many more. A number of threatened and endangered animals and plants depend on family-owned forests for their survival.

Our tree farm is a place to have fun and to enjoy the outdoors. It also is a family business. Selling trees provides **income** for our family. Amma explains to us that one day we will be responsible for keeping the family business going.



Growing Deeper

Income: money that is paid to someone for a product or service
Tree farmers use the income earned from the sale of trees to pay taxes and maintain the farm. It is expensive to maintain forest roads, to prepare land for replanting, to purchase and plant new seedlings, and to repair equipment. Forestry consultants may be hired to help with the harvest and reforestation.



Trees from the farm are used to make things we use daily. We often watch in amazement as the trees are thinned out and limbs are removed.



When logging is done, the trees are carried to mills as logs on huge trucks. The machines they use are so cool!



Growing Deeper

Logging: the business of removing (harvesting) trees and delivering them to a mill

Georgia leads the nation in the production of wood products from private forests. Yet, according to the Georgia Forestry Commission, there are more trees in Georgia now than there were 50 years ago! More than 5,000 products are made from wood and fiber derived from trees grown by tree farmers.



Encouraging wildlife on the farm is one way we keep our tree farm healthy. Another way we keep it healthy is by **thinning** to remove diseased or damaged trees from the forest.



Growing Deeper

Thinning: the selective removal of some trees to improve the growth rate or health of the remaining trees and to provide pulpwood and other materials that are made into things we use all the time



Harvesting trees must be done carefully so that the right trees are removed. One of the best **conservation** practices in **forestry** is a tree harvest that disturbs the land as little as possible and respects wildlife and nearby land, streams and lakes.



Growing Deeper

Conservation: protecting or restoring the environment, ecosystems, vegetation and wildlife

Forestry: the practice of planting, managing and caring for forests
Forestry offers a broad range of careers, many of which allow workers to spend a lot of time outdoors managing the forests, monitoring trees for insects and diseases, collecting and studying forest data, and harvesting and transporting products from the forest.



After a **harvest**, tree seedlings are planted to become a new forest. That is why trees are considered a **renewable resource**. We get our seedlings from Georgia tree nurseries.



Growing Deeper

Harvest: the process of gathering crops, removing them from the place where they have grown

Renewable resource: any resource, such as wood or solar energy, that can be replenished over time

A tree farmer may plant as many as 700 seedlings per acre on land that has been harvested. With good growing conditions, a survival rate of 80-90 % can be achieved.





Finding out a tree's age is really easy. You just count the dark rings on a section of the tree's trunk. Each ring represents one year. One time we counted almost 100 rings on a huge pine tree stump!



Growing Deeper

If you examine the shape and pattern of tree rings you can piece together the tree's life history – from warm, rainy periods to insect damage to wildfires.

We wonder how old
this tree might be?





Wildfires can destroy a forest. We keep wildfire danger down by setting fire to the grass and weeds under the trees. This practice is called **controlled burning**. We love watching Uncle Johnny and Pop Pop burn small trees and brush that could cause a wildfire to spread. They are very careful to keep the fire under control!



Growing Deeper

Wildfire: a large, destructive fire that spreads quickly over woodlands or brush

Controlled burning: a planned fire in a forest to clean out smaller vegetation that competes with trees for nutrients and that adds material that could cause a wildfire to burn out of control. Controlled burning also helps seeds germinate and returns vital nutrients to the soil to help trees grow.



Controlled burning opens up the forest floor for new plants to grow. Deer and other forest animals like the tender leaves of the new plants that appear after a controlled fire.

Fire returns vital **nutrients** to the soil and helps seeds **germinate** to provide new plant life.



Growing Deeper

Nutrients: something that plants, animals and people need to grow
Germinate: when plants take root, sprout and begin to grow



Would you take a bite out of a tree?

No, but material from trees is used in some of the food we eat.



Growing Deeper

Food manufacturers sometimes use fibers in wood pulp to give food items structure and to keep them from breaking easily. This fiber is called 'cellulose'. Cellulose is also used in plastics, some construction materials, medicines, and many other things.

In today's forestry operations, no part of the tree is wasted. Imagine living without these products that contain wood and fiber from trees!



- Newspapers
- Paint
- Toothpaste
- Shampoo



- Food packaging, like milk cartons

- Tires
- Snack bars
- Syrup



- Waffles & pancakes
- Ice cream
- Nail polish



- Smartphone and TV screens
- Gum



- Landscape timbers
- Pine straw and mulch



- Flooring
- Animal bedding
- Baby foods
- Cereals
- Pet foods



Lumber for building is the most familiar Georgia tree product. Georgia-grown utility poles and fence posts are used all over Georgia and the United States. A tree must grow for 25-30 years to become a utility pole!



Many things made from trees grown on Georgia tree farms are sold around the world. Pellets made from small trees and limbs that remain after a harvest are used in many countries to produce energy for homes and businesses.



Growing Deeper

Forest products from Georgia tree farms are shipped from Georgia ports in Savannah and Brunswick, Georgia to 150 countries

Forests are renewable, so we will always have them to keep our environment healthy, to give us products that make our lives better, and to provide jobs that support thousands of Georgia families.



Growing Deeper

Family-owned 'working' forests provide recreation opportunities to Georgians and visitors to our state. Forests are important to hunters, fishermen, birdwatchers, hikers, nature photographers, horseback riders, campers and others. Because of the state's abundance of working forests, Georgia is one of the leading sportsman destinations in America.

We want to become better **stewards** of our family's tree farm every year so that it will be around working for our family and our community for another 200 years.



Growing Deeper

Steward: someone responsible for taking care of something considered worth caring for and preserving

Tree Farm Glossary

ACRE: a unit of measuring land; about the size of a football field

AQUATIC: refers to plants and animals that are found in and around bodies of water, like lakes, rivers, ponds, and wetlands

CONSERVATION: protecting or restoring the environment, ecosystems, vegetation and wildlife

CONTROLLED BURNING: a planned fire in a forest to clean out smaller vegetation that competes with trees for nutrients and that adds material to a wildfire that might cause it to burn out of control

EROSION: the movement of topsoil, the most fertile layer of soil, by water, wind and other forces

FOREST: a large or small area of land that contains mostly trees

FORESTRY: the practice of planting, managing and caring for forests

GERMINATE: when plants take root, sprout and begin to grow

HABITAT: the natural home of a plant or animal that provides food, water, shelter and space

HARVEST: the process of gathering crops, removing them from the place where they have grown

INCOME: money that one is paid for a product or service

LOGGING: the business of removing (harvesting) trees and delivering them to a mill

NUTRIENTS: something that plants, animals and people need to grow

RENEWABLE RESOURCE: any resource, such as wood or solar energy, that can be replenished over time

STEWARD: someone responsible for taking care of something considered worth caring for and preserving

THINNING: the selective removal of some trees to improve the growth rate or health of the remaining trees

TREE FARM: privately owned forests that are managed for the owners' enjoyment and that help the environment, and wood-related products

WILDFIRE: a large, destructive fire that spreads quickly over woodland or brush

Working Forest Management Cycle



Tree farmers and their forests are very important parts of Georgia's agriculture. At all stages of their lives, Georgia's forests serve the farmer, the community and the world. If we are good stewards of our forests we will enjoy them and all of their benefits for a very long time.



Meet these triplets as they take you on a tour of their family's Georgia tree farm. Learn about the benefits of trees and what it takes to keep working forests healthy and productive.



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