



Alabama's *TREASURED* Forests
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STATE CHAMPIONS!

*By Brian Hendricks, Registered Forester/
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As each year passes, the task becomes more challenging of discovering trees that are larger than current state champions. Nevertheless, Alabama crowned seven new state champion trees in 2015. Of these seven, six are outright champions and one is a co-champion. A co-champion is a tree whose total score is in close proximity of the current champion.

Alabama now has a total of 148 champions distributed throughout 49 of its 67 counties. Baldwin County holds claim to the most champions in the state with 17, followed by Madison County with 12, and Wilcox County which has 11 champions. It's also exciting to note that two of the seven new champions – the post oak and red hickory – have a good chance of being declared national champions in 2016! See below for a list of the seven new champion trees for 2015.

The purpose of Alabama's Champion Tree program is to discover, recognize, and preserve the largest tree of each species in Alabama. Anyone can nominate a tree for Champion Tree designation; however, an Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) forester is responsible for collecting the tree's measurements. When determining a champion, three of the tree's components are taken into consideration: circumference, height, and crown spread. For a tree to be eligible, it must be a species that is recognized as native or naturalized in Alabama. A naturalized tree is from an 'introduced' species that has established itself in the wild, reproducing naturally and spreading.

Once a new champion is identified, both its owner and nominator receive a certificate. Additionally, AFC



2015 'Champion' Shumard Oak
 Marengo County

county personnel present the nominator with a permanent tree marker to be placed in proximity to the base of the tree. New champions are added to the AFC's *Champion Trees of Alabama* publication which can be found on the AFC website.

If you know of a tree that you think might be the largest of its species in the state, you are encouraged to send in a nomination by completing an on-line form. Visit the AFC website at www.forestry.alabama.gov and click on the 'Champion Tree Program' link found on the home page. Due to limited AFC resources, a nominator is strongly encouraged to review the measurements of the current champion to get an idea if his candidate tree has a chance of defeating the current champion's score before sending in a nomination. After all, there are millions of 'big' trees in Alabama, but to be a CHAMPION, it must be THE biggest.

Nominations may be sent in year round; however, for a tree to be eligible for Champion Tree designation in 2016, the nomination form must be received by the program coordinator no later than June 1, 2016. 📧

TREE SPECIES	COUNTY	NOMINATOR	OWNER
Beech, American (co-champion)	Autauga	Deven Peek	City of Prattville
Buckeye, Red	Cherokee	Keith Niedermeier	Paul Rogers
Hickory, Red	Butler	Wayne K. Webb	State of Alabama
Holly, Dahoon	Baldwin	Chan West	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Oak, Post	Colbert	Karen Smith	Dale and Karen Smith
Oak, Shumard	Marengo	Chris Chambers	The Westervelt Company
Sweetgum	Marengo	Ben Sherrod	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers