

A Tale of Two Centuries

Roy Jordan follows in the footsteps of his ancestors

By Cole Sikes, Alabama Forestry Commission

Why do we continue to carry traditions? Is it because someone told us to? Is it because it's what we are supposed to do? . . . I believe that what we hold on to pertains to our character, honor, and love. Traditions can define cultures, religions, and even countries. What is often overlooked are the family traditions. These are what make every one of us special in our own way of life. We can also have customs that express our traditions. Some come in the form of trinkets, vacations, stories, and even a backyard football game in the fall.

What if a piece of land symbolized a tradition? It would show generations of work containing memories that appear to have no end. Roy Jordan of Marengo County owns 720 examples of this traditional heritage. They come in the form of TREASURE Forest acres that are unique to the Jordan family. This tradition, like no other, earned Jordan a Helene Mosley Memorial TREASURE Forest Award in 2017.

Spanning four generations of managing Alabama's beautiful forests, Jordan's inheritance comes from his father, grandfather, great grandfather, and even great-great grandfather. After settling in Marengo County in 1818, his great-great grandfather built a log house and used his entire property for agriculture. The log home still stands today. For over a century, farming was the land's purpose until one of the grandfathers began utilizing the land for cattle and timber production. In the early 1900s, Jordan's father began the family's relationship with the Alabama

Forestry Commission (AFC). He diligently followed the agency's recommended practices along with insight from Extension Service and Soil Conservation. Success from his involvement with the AFC allowed the family to designate the property for their current forestry practices.

Jordan's main TREASURE Forest management objective is timber production, with wildlife management following as a "close number two." Recreation is also important to Jordan, allowing him to participate in almost all aspects of land management. His 720 acres is divided into two sections referred to as the 'Landrum Place' and 'Home Place.' Cumulatively, these portions represent 306 acres of pine trees, 144 acres of pine and hardwood mixture, and 225 acres of preferred hardwood species.

The Home Place is made of approximately 225 acres currently used for pine tree production and wildlife food plots. This section contains roughly 70 acres of longleaf plantation, 15 acres of loblolly plantation, 18 acres of food plots/pasture, and 42 acres of natural pine hardwood. The last 79 acres of pine/hardwood are located in a streamside management zone (SMZ), a strip of land immediately adjacent to water where soils, organic matter, and vegetation are managed to protect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of surface water downstream from forestry operations.

Included in the Landrum Place is roughly 235 acres of loblolly pine trees, 8 acres of longleaf pine plantation, 116 acres of natural oaks, a 2.3-acre pond, 22 acres of food plots/pasture, and

110 acres of desired hardwoods. Ninety percent of the Landrum Place's hardwoods are contained in another SMZ. This has immeasurably improved water quality throughout the property. Jordan also rebuilt the dam on his pond and stocked it full of bass and bream before fertilizing it, furthering the property's aquatic qualities.

Jordan's pine trees receive a specific management plan based on the species and their associated stand ages. Approximately 78 acres of longleaf and 228 acres of loblolly plantation are treated on an even-age stand method. This process entails that pine stands with equal ages receive prescribed burning on a two- to three-year cycle. Jordan believes this is "one of the best tools we have available in pine timber management." Longleaf pines begin this cycle at the younger ages of 2 or 3, while loblolly stands are burned beginning at 8 and 10. Along with prescribed burning, Jordan prefers to commercially thin all pine species starting at 12 to 14 years old. The combination of these practices allows the soil to remain rich in nutrients and decreases natural competition.

His mixed hardwoods also receive a management plan of their own. Contrary to his pines' even-age management where the entire stand is treated identically based on its age, hardwood treatment decisions are made on a stem-by-stem process rather

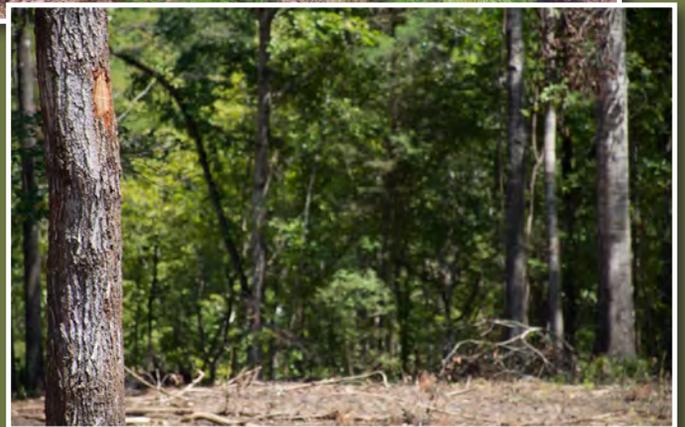
than stand-by-stand. Most of his hardwoods and hardwood mixes are used for wildlife habitat enhancement and SMZ purposes.

Wildlife management on the two tracts has been successful because of a particular land trait, diversity. As stated earlier, Jordan's natural habitat contains a variety of different timber. The best wildlife habitat needs copious amounts of diversity ranging from young to mature timber, thick brush to almost open savannas, and property edges among timber stands varying in size, height, stocking, and species. The culmination of his forest plantings and practices has created an environment that accommodates numerous wildlife species such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and dove.

Natural food resources have been returned to his pine stands that have been treated with commercial thinning and prescribed burn. Legumes, forbs, and wildflowers now flourish after the removal of forest floor litter, allowing sunlight to reach it to promote growth. Above all Jordan's tree species, he relies most on one tree for wildlife forage, the sawtooth oak. During Alabama's drought of 2016, he recalls his 122 sawtooths providing a wealth of acorns near his food plots. This is because of the tree's ability to adapt to a dry environment, making it a durable species. Jordan plants food plots in summer as well as winter, allowing wildlife to have a year-round supply. His preferred crops are wheat, oats, and clover, rotated on a seasonal basis.

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Claiming that his south Alabama soil responds well to fertilizer, he shared how it has affected the family's hunting. "We are able to grow some really nice deer on the property," said Jordan. The family typically harvests between 15 to 20 deer annually. Among those is somewhat of a one-to-one ratio of doe and buck taken among his 12 food plots, finding a 'sweet spot' for their deer population that proves to be effective and sustainable.

Rounding out Jordan's management objectives is education. With assistance from the AFC, landowner tours have been hosted on both the Home and Landrum Places. Tour participants would occasionally stop and compliment or criticize what Jordan was practicing on his property. "Most of the time they were complimentary," he said with a grin. Since 2006, he has hosted three Classroom in the Forest events. Local fifth-grade students from Sweet Water and Marengo schools were taught about forests in their very own environment. The young scholars have enjoyed every field day they have spent on this TREASURE Forest.

A unique feature can be found on his forest in the form of a large rock pile. Jordan calls it his 'Ebenezer' which refers to a Biblical story in the book of 1 Samuel. After God saved Samuel and the Israelites from an impending doom from the Philistines, Samuel placed a stone in memorial of God's love for them, naming it Ebenezer. Jordan gathered these rocks from his forest and made a monument of his own, with a track loader of course. "I placed these as memorial to my ancestors because I stand on the shoulders of people that were here before I was, and I want to give them credit," said Jordan.

The future of this TREASURE Forest is bright according to Jordan. He is confident that his children will continue to love the land as he has. Looking back on his hard work on the property, he said, "I'm sometimes known as a 'tree hugger,' but I don't think that's all bad." 🌲

