

One of the most important decisions that a landowner must make after harvesting a stand of trees is how to re-establish the site with a new forest stand. There is a valuable reason to replant your property with improved seedlings. Through testing and selective improvements over the last fifty years, foresters have been able to produce genetically improved pine and hardwood seedlings that can outperform naturally-regenerated trees. These trees grow faster, are less susceptible to insects and disease, and have far greater survival characteristics.



There are many private and state nurseries located in Alabama that sell improved seedlings. Normally, you should begin the process of ordering seedlings in the spring or summer prior to the winter during which you wish to plant seedlings. Normally, planting season is from mid-December to mid-March, while the seedlings are dormant.



Seedlings are usually packaged in groups of 25, 100, 500, or 1,000 per bundle. Seedlings can be purchased bareroot, containerized, or in large gallon-sized buckets. Pine seedlings usually cost \$35 to \$80 per thousand, bareroot. Hardwood seedlings usually cost \$100 to \$250 per thousand. Bareroot are the least expensive. Containerized and gallon-sized seedlings cost more. Some seedlings in high demand, such as longleaf pine or white oak, sell for a premium.

STORAGE AND HANDLING: Ideally, seedlings should be planted immediately upon delivery. If immediate planting is not possible, they should be stored in a shady, cool place that is protected from direct sunlight, wind, and freezing temperatures. Bundles should be stacked loosely with no more than three high to permit free circulation of cool, moist air. Spacers (2" x 4" or 4" x 4") should be placed between layers, and the bundles stacked with one end slightly elevated to ensure proper drainage.

PLANTING: Seedlings are planted either by hand or with a machine planter. An experienced hand-planting crew can average 1,500 seedlings planted per person per day. This rate varies with site conditions. A machine planting crew can average 8,000 seedlings planted per day. Clean, open sites, such as pastureland and fields, should be planted with a machine tree planter if possible. A number of forestry vendors and consultants are available in most parts of the State to plant seedlings on a fee basis. Consult your local Alabama Forestry Commission office to get a list of vendors available in your area.

OTHER OPTIONS: In some areas, direct seeding might be considered but, while the cost of seed is considerably less than that of seedlings, this technique requires extensive site preparation to assure a reasonable chance of success. Direct seeding should be attempted only upon the advice of your forester.

Contact your county forester or extension agent for specific information on which nurseries sell improved seedlings in your area.

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