

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GADSDEN COUNTY TREE FARMER
IS TOPS IN STATE**



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Tallahassee, FL – October 1, 2009 -- Harvey Sweeney and his wife, Jeanette are the owners of a 277-acre Tree Farm in Gadsden County. The Florida Forestry Association recently recognized the outdoor showplace as the best in Florida when Harvey Sweeney was named Florida Tree Farmer of the Year. The award is presented each year to recognize outstanding stewardship by a private landowner on forestland certified under the American Tree Farm System.

A special tour of the Sweeney Tree Farm is scheduled for October 22, 2009, 9:00 AM to approximately 1:00 PM, Eastern Time. The Sweeney's tree farm is located in Gadsden County, Southeast of Chattahoochee. Lunch will be provided. Please reply with RSVP (and to receive directions) no later than Friday, October 9 to Phil at the Florida Forestry Association (850-222-5646 or phil@forestfla.org)

The property first came under a written multiple use management plan in 1998 that emphasizes timber and wildlife management, along with enhancing the aesthetics of the land. The property was entered into the American Tree Farm System in 2007.

"Individuals like Harvey Sweeney and his family hold the key to the kinds of forests, forest activities and forest resources future generations of Floridians will enjoy" says Jeff Doran, Executive Vice President, Florida Forestry Association. Water, wildlife, recreation and wood tell the story of sustainable forestry and the Sweeney Tree Farm," Doran concludes.

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The Sweeney's themselves, and their grown children, take an active role in most of the day-to day work involved in the proper management of a Tree Farm. This includes tree planting, prescribed burning, trail maintenance, pond restoration and managing food plots.

The Sweeney's also consult with forestry professionals when needed for long-term planning and for conducting timber sales. Recent forest management activities on the Tree Farm include the reforestation of 35 acres to Long Leaf Pine following conversion from a mixed stand, along with selective thinning on other parts of the property yielding pulpwood, chip-n-saw and saw timber products.

Perhaps above all, the Sweeney's are both interested in learning how to do things better, and sharing their experiences with others. For example, Harvey has earned the designations of "Master Tree Farmer" and "Master Wildlifer" through Florida's Extension Service, and is also on the forestry advisory board for IFAS. Additionally, the property is enrolled in the Florida Stewardship Forest program and the Sweeney's have already hosted a Forest Stewardship field-day tour.

Florida currently over 700 certified Tree Farms, accounting for 600,000-plus acres of land. To qualify for Tree Farm certification, woodlands must be:

- 10 acres or more
- Under management, with a written and implemented plan that accounts for water quality, wildlife habitat, soil conservation and biodiversity, as well as production of forest products
- Protected from fire, insects, disease, and destructive grazing
- Reforested in a timely manner after harvesting

For more information contact Florida Forestry Association at info@forestfla.org
Or visit www.floridaforest.org