

Master Naturalist Opportunities with the Virginia Big Tree Program

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Lunchtime Continuing Education Webinar

July 20, 2017

WebEx



Presentation Overview

OVERVIEW

- **Brief look at the history and organization of the Virginia Big Tree Program**

BACKGROUND

- **Quick tour of the Virginia Big Tree Register**

REGISTER

- **Key facts on big tree measurement, scoring, and reporting**

MEASURE

REPORT

- **Engagement opportunities for Master Naturalists**

ENGAGEMENT

TAKE HOME



OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

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Photo credit: Alex Cassell (2016)

Mission Statement

**To promote the care and
appreciation of trees – big and small**

**Document the largest specimens in the state and provide
educational resources to aid in their protection and care**

July 10, 1969

Mr. William A. McElfresh
Extension Specialist, 4-H
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Blacksburg, Virginia

Dear Mr. McElfresh:

Having just returned to VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc., from the Army, I have been assigned the project of working with you and 4-H Club workers on "Virginia's Big Trees." From the May '66 issue of "American Forests" magazine I learned that out of some 385 National Champion trees, Virginia has only two listed - post oak in Charlotte County and loblolly pine near Ammon, Virginia; so it does look like we have plenty of room to grow!

I have quite a few questions to ask and some ideas how VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc., may be of some help in initiating the program. I'm wondering if you will be attending the Conservation and Forestry Educational Conference in Charlottesville July 21. If so, I will try to see you there, or if more convenient, I will try to get in touch with you sometime during the week before or following the meeting.

Looking forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely yours,

VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc.

Charles F. Finley, Jr.
Assistant Director

CFF, Jr.:cds

OVERVIEW

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OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

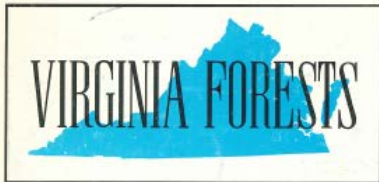
REGISTER

MEASURE

REPORT

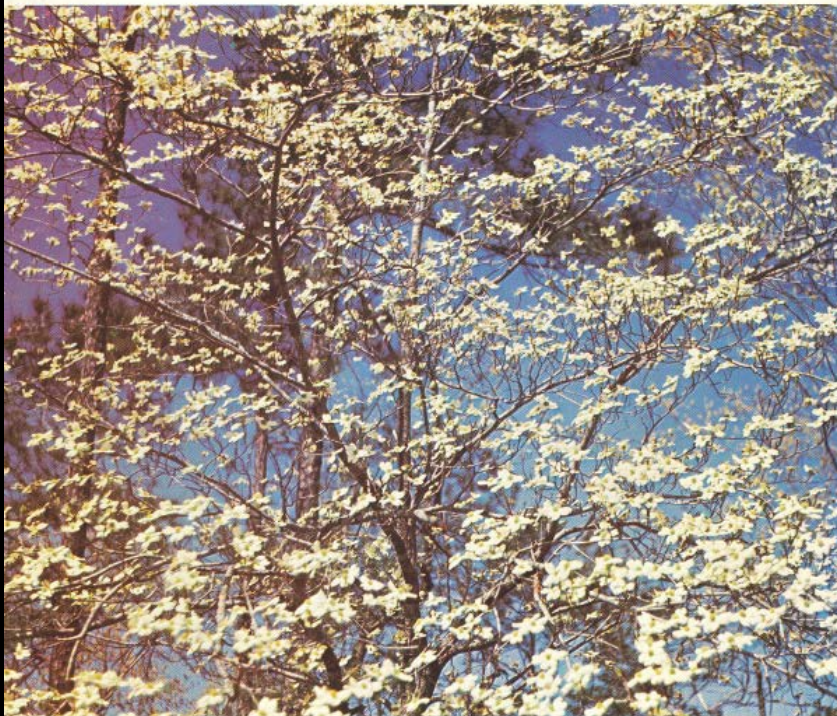
ENGAGEMENT

TAKE HOME



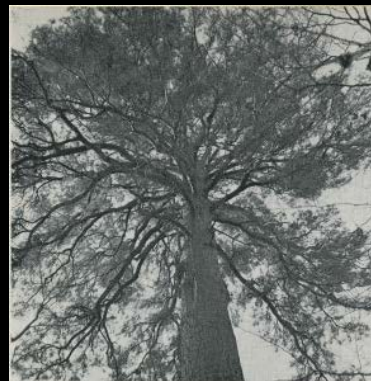
Spring, 1970

Magazine



Dogwood is the symbol of spring—the loveliest season of the year in Virginia.

Membership Directory Issue



Virginia's largest loblolly pine, located in Dinwiddie County on the farm of S. S. Reames is 16' 6" in circumference, 128' tall, with a crown spread of 64'.

Photos by: W. A. McElfresh

Big Tree Search

A cooperative project between
VF, Inc., and the VPI Extension
Division

John Belshan, Dinwiddie County Agent, and Paul Cassell, Nottoway County Agent, gaze upward at Virginia's largest pine tree. It is a co-champion nationally.



VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc., in cooperation with the Extension Division at VPI, is launching a new project to be known as the Big Tree Search. Aimed primarily at the members of FFA chapters and 4-H clubs, the purpose of the program will be to find and record Virginia's largest trees, by species—that is, the largest white oak, the largest red maple, and Virginia pine, etc. Any trees within the State are eligible for nomination as a big tree, and all 4-H and FFA members are encouraged to search out the woods, trees in their front yards, and even trees planted long ago around court houses and other public buildings as potential "big trees."

To nominate a big tree for the Virginia Register, young people should obtain a nomination form from their 4-H club leader, or Vo-Ag instructor, fill it out and send it to VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc., in Richmond. One of the most important items, of course, is identifying the species of tree being nominated. Both the common name and scientific name should be given, because all nominations will be classified by species. The next step is measuring the height, circumference, and crown spread of the tree. Some helpful sketches and directions for taking these measurements are found on the back side of the nomination form.

All nomination forms should be sent to VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc. We will separate the trees, the "big" from the "biggest," and upon selection of the biggest, will notify the nominator and a local forester who will then help verify the tree's measurements. All big trees must be verified by a forester before they can be included in the Register of Big Virginia trees. In this way, we hope to prevent wasting excessive professional time, but still provide the contacts for some of the foresters in Virginia to "teach and preach a little forestry" to these young people.

From time to time VIRGINIA FORESTS, Inc., and the VPI Cooperative Extension Division will publish a list or booklet of the Big Trees; also included will be the location of the tree, its measurements, and the name and address of the nominator.

All trees that make it into Virginia's Register of Big Trees will also be considered for submission to the National Register in Washington, D. C., which is kept by the American Forestry Association. At the present time, Virginia lays claim to two of America's biggest trees: the loblolly pine and the osage orange. The loblolly pine, in Dinwiddie County, measures 16½ feet in circumference and 128 feet high. The osage orange tree is more than 300 years old and is located at Red Hill Plantation near Brookneal where Patrick Henry spent his retirement years. It measures 23 feet in circumference and 50 feet high.

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Eric Wiseman named coordinator of Virginia Big Tree Program

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Printer-Friendly PDF

BLACKSBURG, Va., Dec. 5, 2013 – [Eric Wiseman](#), associate professor of urban forestry and arboriculture and a [Virginia Cooperative Extension](#) specialist in the [College of Natural Resources and Environment](#), has been named coordinator of the [Virginia Big Tree Program](#).

"I will work very hard to ensure that everyone continues to enjoy and value the Virginia Big Tree Program," said Wiseman.

The Virginia Big Tree Program, which began as a 4-H and Future Farmers of America project in 1970, aims to increase the care and appreciation of trees. Based in Virginia Tech's [Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation](#), the program maintains a database of the top five largest trees of each species in the state.



Eric Wiseman

Dr. Jeff Kirwan
Professor Emeritus
Virginia Tech

Dr. Eric Wiseman
Tree Geek
Virginia Tech

OVERVIEW

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Tracey Sherman
Program Support
Virginia Tech



John Peterson
Database Programmer
Virginia Tech

OVERVIEW

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Big Tree Interns



OVERVIEW

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Big Tree Volunteers

Our New Website

OVERVIEW

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TAKE HOME

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Virginia Big Trees website. The browser address bar displays "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/index.html". The site header includes the "Virginia BIG Trees" logo and navigation links for "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". The main content area features four large images with interactive overlays: "Search Big Trees...", "Browse Big Trees...", "Measure Big Trees...", and "Report Big Trees...". Below this is a section titled "Our Partners" with logos for VirginiaTech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, TREES VIRGINIA (Virginia Urban Forest Council), VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION, and AMERICAN FORESTS.

bigtree.cnre.vt.edu

Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

- **An online searchable database plus an historical hardcopy archive (kept at Virginia Tech)**

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

- **Top-five* specimens of native and non-native tree species**

MEASURE

- **Currently no species restrictions for register entry**

REPORT

- **445 species and sub-species are curated currently**

ENGAGEMENT

- **Minimum size eligibility: 9.5" trunk circumference and 13' height**

TAKE HOME



Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

- **1,516 living specimens as of 7/20/17**
- **114 counties & independent cities have 1 or more entries**
- **All but 48 entries have been recertified in the last 10 years**

BACKGROUND

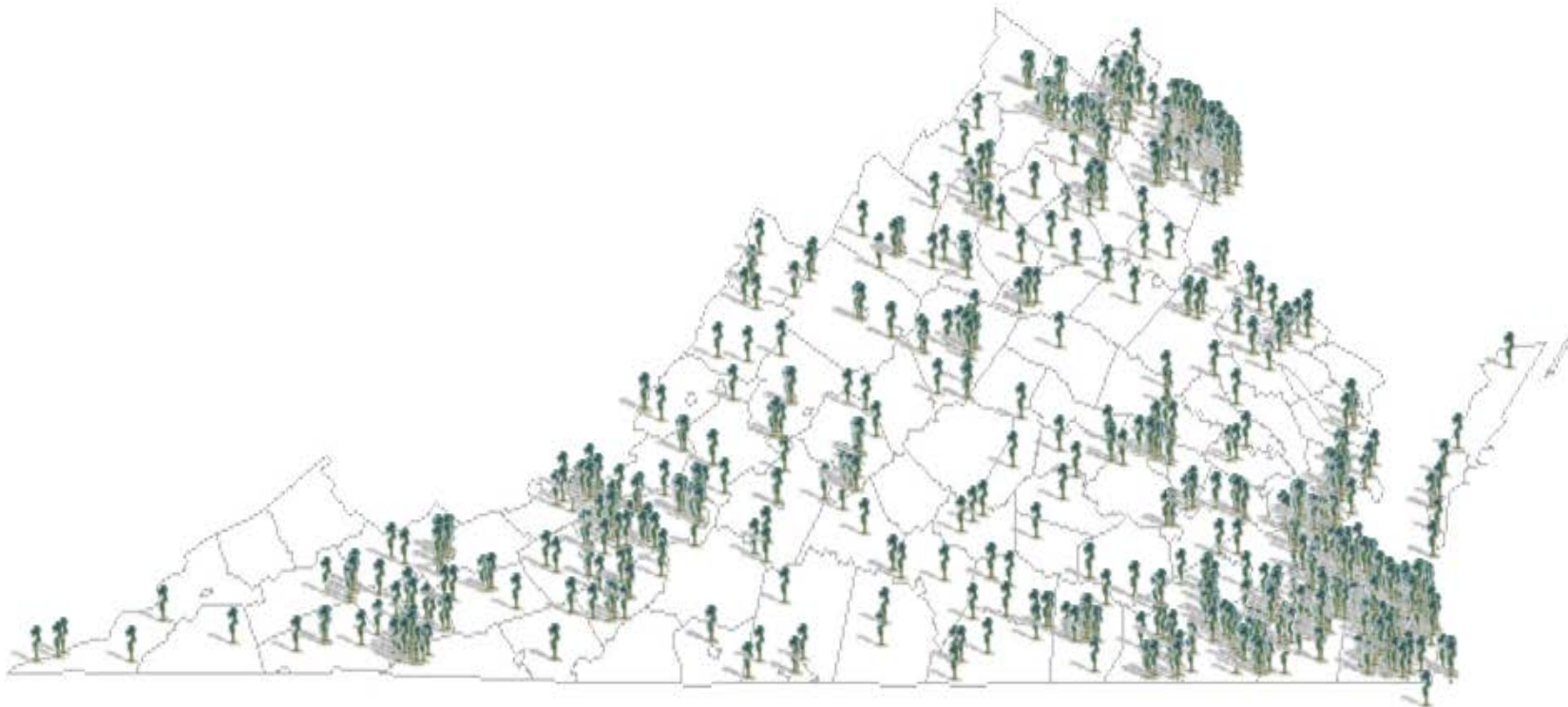
REGISTER

MEASURE

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TAKE HOME



Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

- **54 current national champions**

BACKGROUND

- **4th place nationally (CA, TX, FL, VA)**

REGISTER

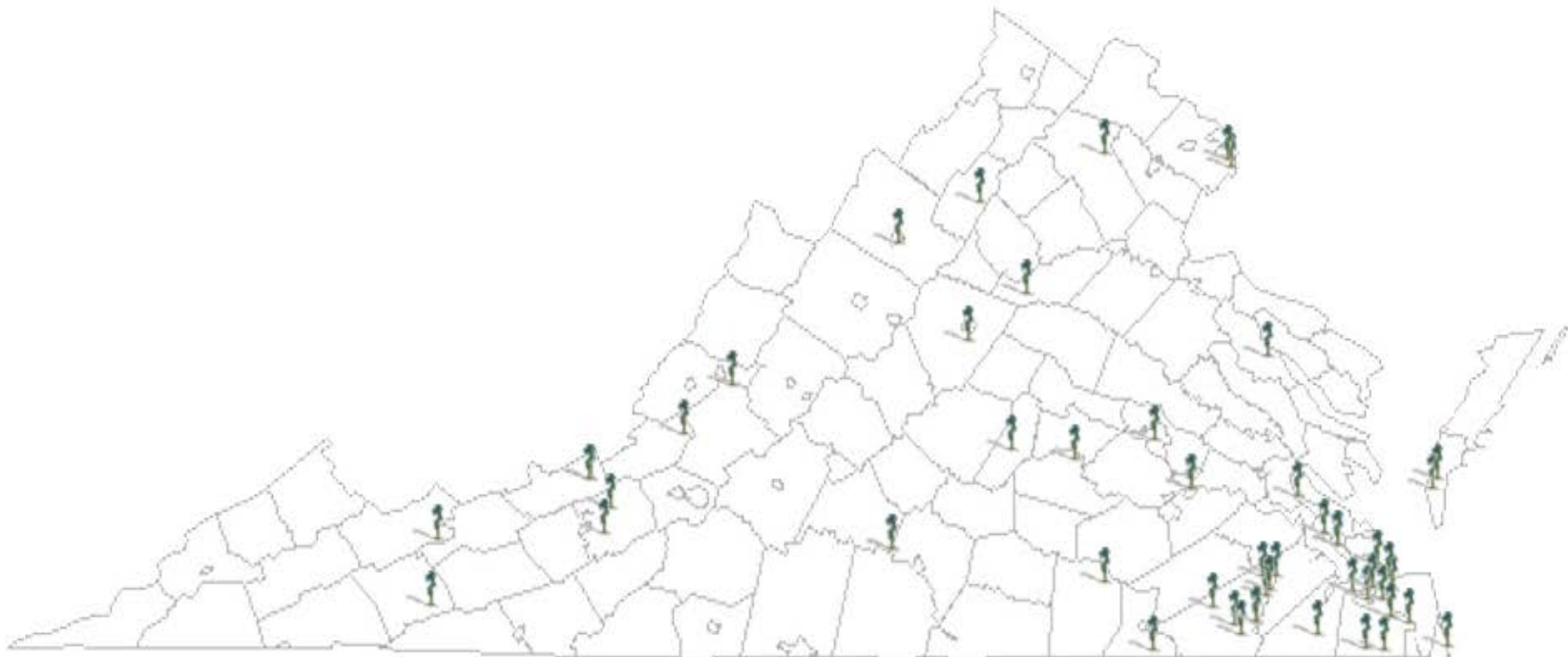


MEASURE

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TAKE HOME



Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

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TAKE HOME

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Virginia Big Trees Register website. The browser address bar displays "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/index.html". The site header includes the logo "Virginia BIG Trees" and navigation links for "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". The main content area features four large images with corresponding action buttons: "Search Big Trees...", "Browse Big Trees...", "Measure Big Trees...", and "Report Big Trees...". Below this is a section titled "Our Partners" with logos for VirginiaTech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, TREES VIRGINIA (Virginia Urban Forest Council), VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION, and AMERICAN FORESTS. Two large orange arrows point upwards from the partner logos towards the "REGISTER" and "MEASURE" menu items on the left sidebar.

Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/search.cfm". The website header includes the "Virginia BIG Trees" logo and navigation links for Home, Learn More, Get Involved, and About. The main content area features a search title, a search box with the placeholder "Common or Latin name", and a search button. Below the search box, there is a link to "advanced search" and a link to a PDF version of the register. To the right, a "Related Links" section lists several options. At the bottom, an orange arrow points to the "Our Partners" section, which displays logos for Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Trees Virginia, Virginia Forestry Association, and American Forests.

Search- VA Big Trees

bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/search.cfm

Virginia **BIG** Trees

Home Learn More Get Involved About

Search the Virginia Big Tree Register

Search for a tree by common or Latin name. A partial name search will display all "top-five" living specimens with that name in common. Leaving the search term blank will display all "top-five" living specimens in the register.

Common or Latin name

For more search options, try the **advanced search**

Want a PDF version of the Register? [Click here](#) (last update: 5/5/2017)

Related Links

- [Browse VA National Champions](#)
- [Browse VA State Champions](#)
- [Browse Common Native State Champions](#)
- [Report a Big Tree](#)
- [National Big Tree Register](#)

Our Partners

VirginiaTech

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech - Virginia State University

TREES VIRGINIA
Virginia Urban Forest Council

VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

AMERICAN FORESTS

Virginia Big Tree Register

OVERVIEW

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL `bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/results.cfm?Browse`. The page title is "Virginia BIG Trees" and the navigation menu includes "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". The main content area displays "Search Results" for the query "Virginia National Champions", indicating that 54 records were found. A legend explains that "*" denotes a State Champion and "**" denotes a National Champion. Below this, there is a "Map results" section with a "Search again" button. A table lists the search results, with columns for "Common Name", "Latin Name", "City or County", and "Total Points". To the right of the table, a "Related Links" section provides additional navigation options. A large orange arrow points to the "Report Big Trees" link in the Related Links section.

Search Results

You searched for "Virginia National Champions".
54 records were found for your search.
* = State Champ, ** = National Champ

Map results

Search again

Click the column header to sort the table

Common Name	Latin Name	City or County	Total Points
Fraser fir **	<i>Abies fraseri</i>	City of Harrisonburg	223
boxelder **	<i>Acer negundo</i>	Essex	312
trilobum red maple **	<i>Acer rubrum var. trilobum</i>	Montgomery	166
yellow buckeye **	<i>Aesculus flava</i>	Alleghany	407
hazel alder **	<i>Alnus serrulata</i>	Northampton	85

Related Links

- Browse VA National Champions
- Browse VA State Champions
- Browse Common Native State Champions
- Report Big Trees
- National Big Tree Register

Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

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TAKE HOME

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Virginia Big Trees website. The browser address bar displays "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/index.html". The site header includes the logo "Virginia BIG Trees" and navigation links for "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". Below the header is a grid of four images, each with a semi-transparent overlay containing an icon and text:

- Image 1: A man in a red cap and dark shirt is climbing a large tree trunk. Overlay: Search icon, "Search Big Trees..."
- Image 2: A woman is looking up at a massive tree trunk. Overlay: List icon, "Browse Big Trees..."
- Image 3: A man in a red cap is measuring a tree trunk. Overlay: Checkmark icon, "Measure Big Trees..."
- Image 4: Three people are sitting on the ground next to a large tree. Overlay: Envelope icon, "Report Big Trees..."

Below the grid is a section titled "Our Partners" with an orange arrow pointing to the "TREES VIRGINIA" logo. The logos for the partners are:

- VirginiaTech
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- TREES VIRGINIA (Virginia Urban Forest Council)
- VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
- AMERICAN FORESTS

Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

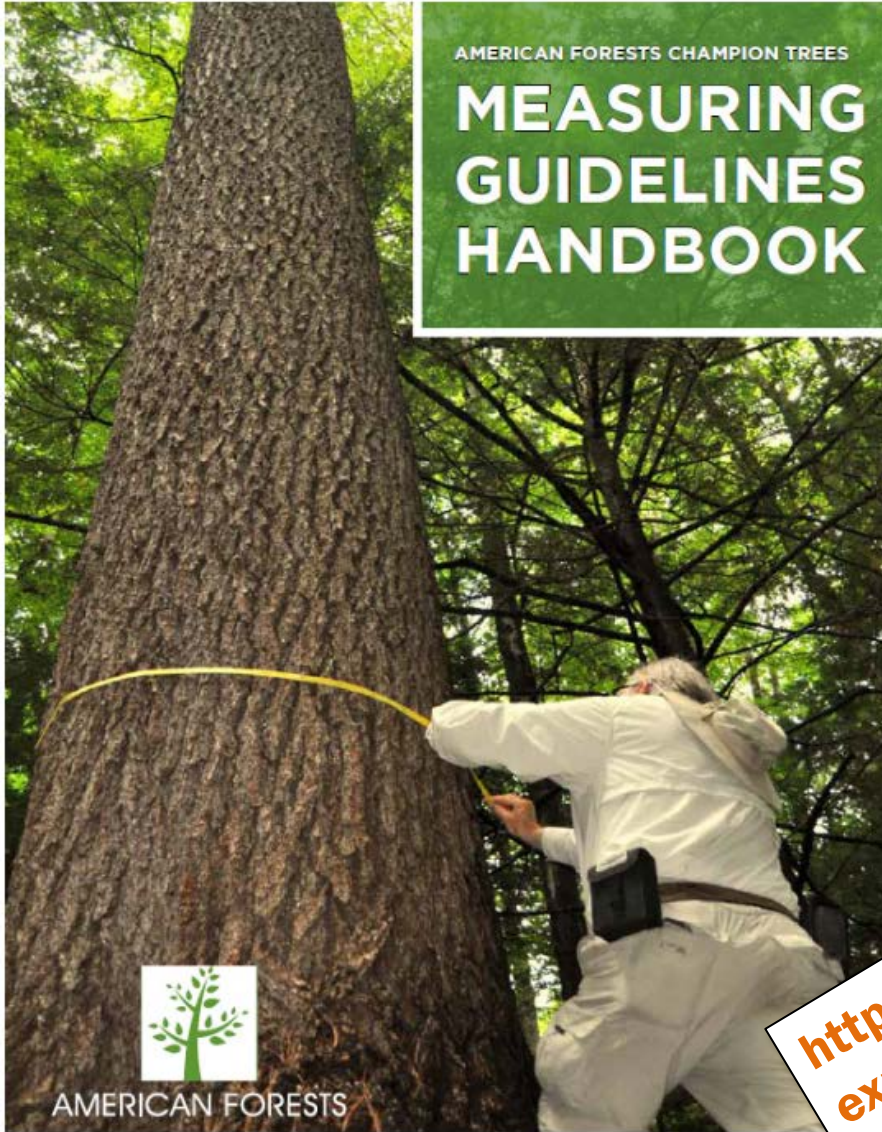
REGISTER

MEASURE

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TAKE HOME



[http://www.americanforests.org/
explore-forests/americas-biggest-
trees/nominate-a-tree/](http://www.americanforests.org/explore-forests/americas-biggest-trees/nominate-a-tree/)

Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

- **Eligible tree: $\geq 9.5''$ trunk circumference & $\geq 13'$ height**

BACKGROUND

- **Trunk circumference @ 4.5' above ground line (inches)**

REGISTER

- **Vertical height from ground line to highest branch (feet)**

MEASURE

- **Average crown spread in two perpendicular planes (feet)**

REPORT

Circumference (1 point per inch)

ENGAGEMENT

+ Height (1 point per foot)

TAKE HOME

+ Crown Spread (1/4 point per foot)

Big Tree Score =

Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

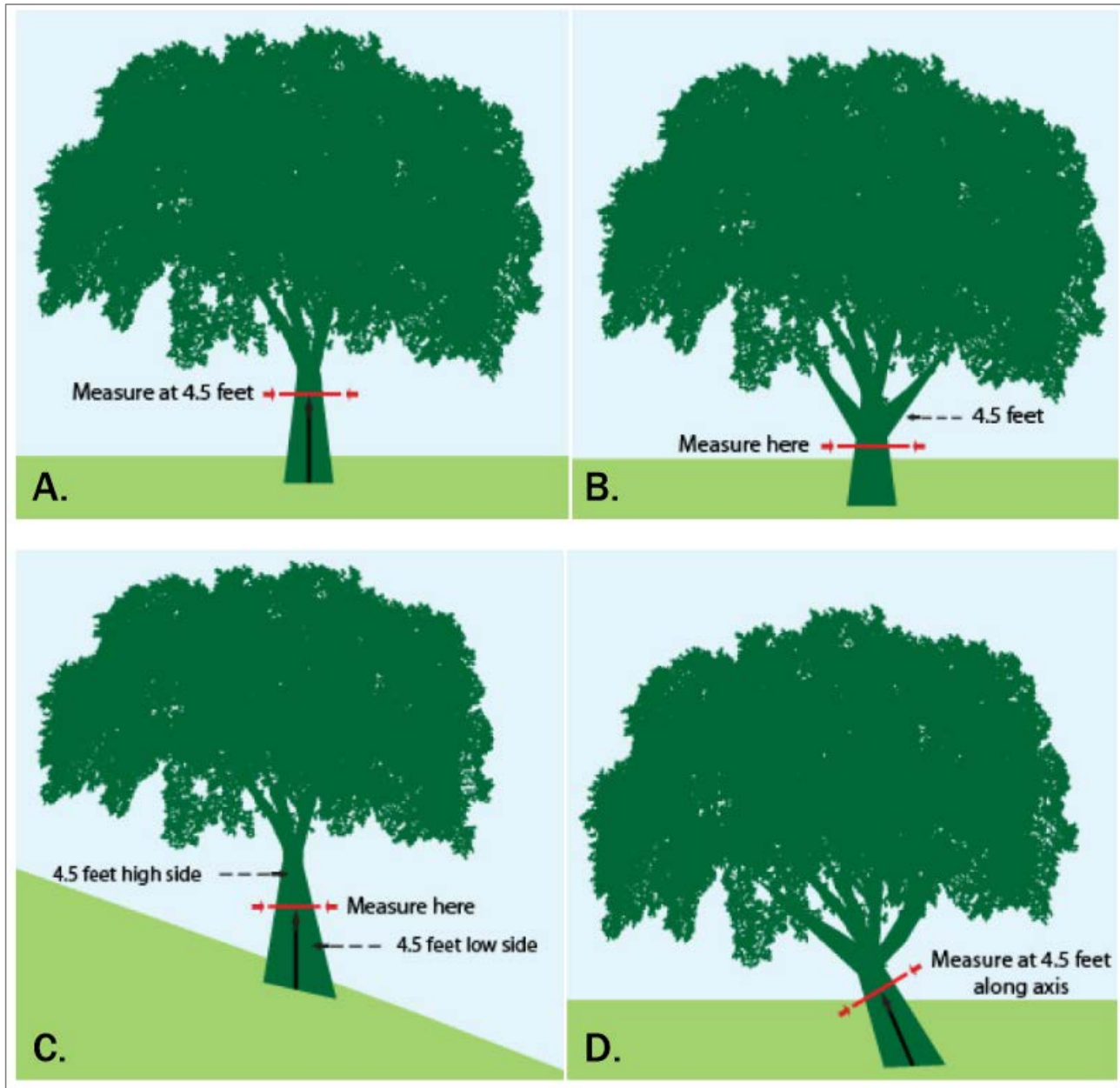
REGISTER

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Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

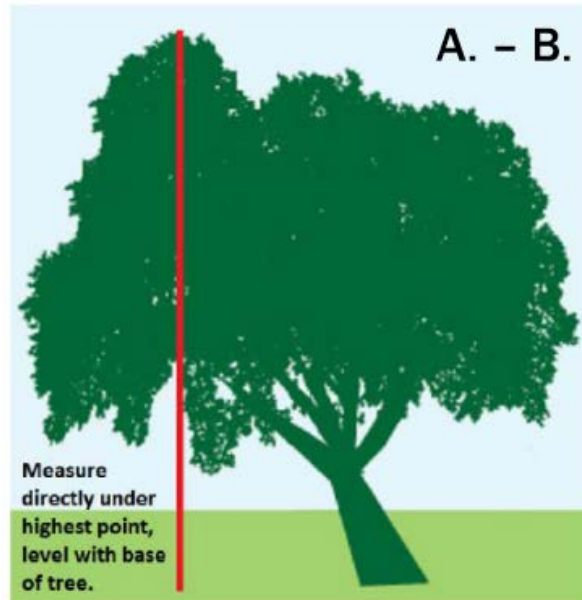
REGISTER

MEASURE

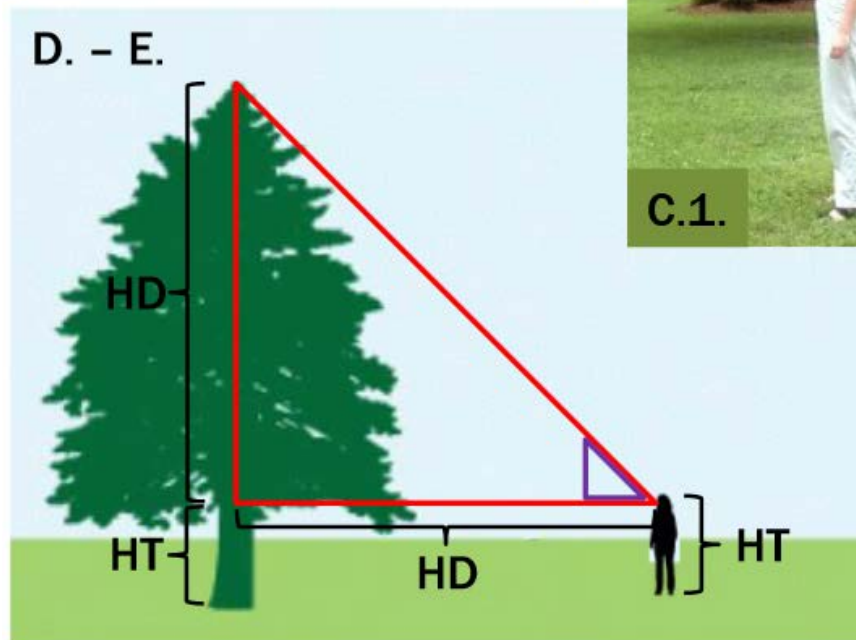
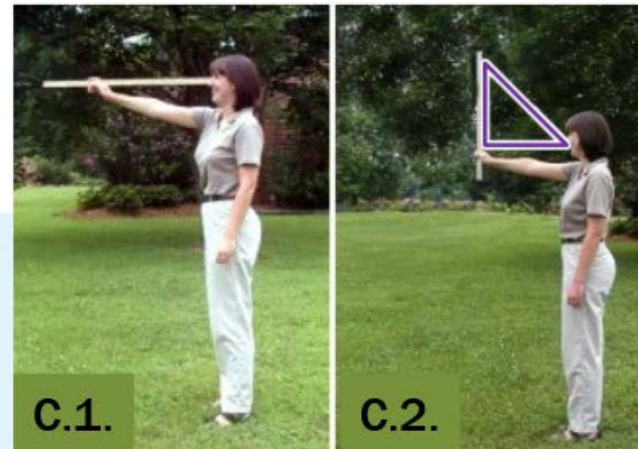
REPORT

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Note: This technique is most accurate for straight trees on flat ground.



This technique works because the red and purple triangles are similar right triangles.

Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

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Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

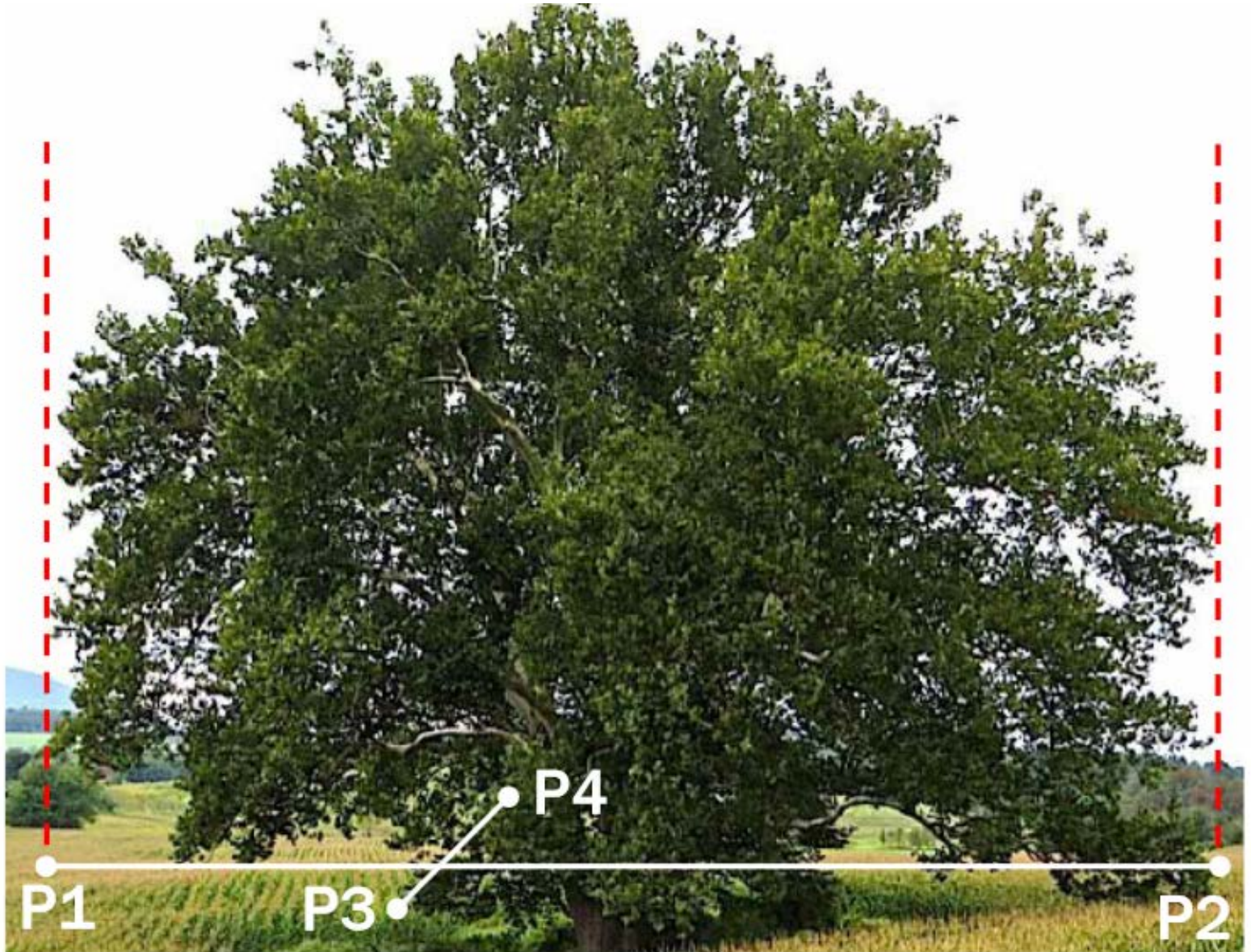
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Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

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Reporting a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

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TAKE HOME

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Virginia Big Trees website. At the top, the browser address bar displays "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/index.html". The website header features the "Virginia BIG Trees" logo and navigation links for "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". Below the header is a grid of four main content areas, each with a photograph and a call-to-action button:

- Search Big Trees...**: A button with a magnifying glass icon, overlaid on a photo of a man in a red cap standing next to a large tree with white blossoms.
- Browse Big Trees...**: A button with a list icon, overlaid on a photo of a person looking up at a massive tree trunk.
- Measure Big Trees...**: A button with a checkmark icon, overlaid on a photo of a person in a red cap measuring a tree trunk.
- Report Big Trees...**: A button with an envelope icon, overlaid on a photo of three people (two men and one woman) sitting on the ground next to a large tree.

Below the grid is a section titled "Our Partners" which includes logos for VirginiaTech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, TREES VIRGINIA (Virginia Urban Forest Council), VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION, and AMERICAN FORESTS. A large orange arrow points from the "AMERICAN FORESTS" logo towards the "Report Big Trees..." button.

Reporting a Big Tree

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://vce.az1>. The page header features the Virginia Cooperative Extension logo and text: "Virginia Cooperative Extension Virginia Tech • Virginia State University". The main heading is "Virginia Big Tree Program Personal Information". Below this, a section titled "Please provide the following information about yourself (*required information):" contains four input fields: "First and last name*", "Email address*", "Phone number", and "Mailing address". A second section asks "May we have permission to display your information on our website?" with three radio button options: "Yes", "No", and "Only the following information may be displayed:" followed by an empty text box. At the bottom, a progress bar shows 0% completion.

- **Species name**
- **Measurements**
- **Locality name**
- **Address or GPS**
- **Owner info**
- **Measurer info**
- **Nominator info**
- **PHOTOS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Reporting a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

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Virginia Big Tree Program Nomination Form

- Name and address of nominator/measurer: _____ Date: _____
Phone and email of nominator/measurer: _____
Is the nominator/measurer or the owner the contact for this tree? _____
Name and address of tree owner: _____
- Kind of tree (common name): _____ (scientific name): _____
- Comments about tree (is it healthy, is it endangered by development, does it have historical significance?):

- Dimensions of tree (measurement guidelines on page 2):
Trunk circumference: ____ (inches) Measurement height: ____ (ft)
Vertical tree height: _____ (feet) (if other than standard 4.5')
Average crown spread: ____ (feet)
Method of vertical height measurement: _____
Score calculation:
Trunk circumference: ____ (1 pt. per inch)
+ Height: _____ (1 pt. per foot)
+ Avg. crown spread: ____ (¼ pt. per foot)
= Total points: _____
- Directions to tree (describe using major roadways or landmarks that are nearby):

- County or city where tree is located: _____
- GPS coordinates (please use decimal degrees):
N _____ W _____
- May this nomination be shared publicly?
Yes: _____ No: _____
- Sketch map of tree location on owner's property:
North: ↑
- Mail nomination to:
Virginia Big Tree Program

Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

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The screenshot shows the homepage of the Virginia Big Trees website. At the top, the browser address bar displays 'bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/index.html'. The website header features the 'Virginia BIG Trees' logo and navigation links for 'Home', 'Learn More', 'Get Involved', and 'About'. Below the header is a grid of four images, each with a call-to-action button: 'Search Big Trees...', 'Browse Big Trees...', 'Measure Big Trees...', and 'Report Big Trees...'. An orange arrow points to the 'Measure Big Trees...' button. The 'Our Partners' section at the bottom lists five organizations: Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Trees Virginia (Virginia Urban Forest Council), Virginia Forestry Association, and American Forests.

Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

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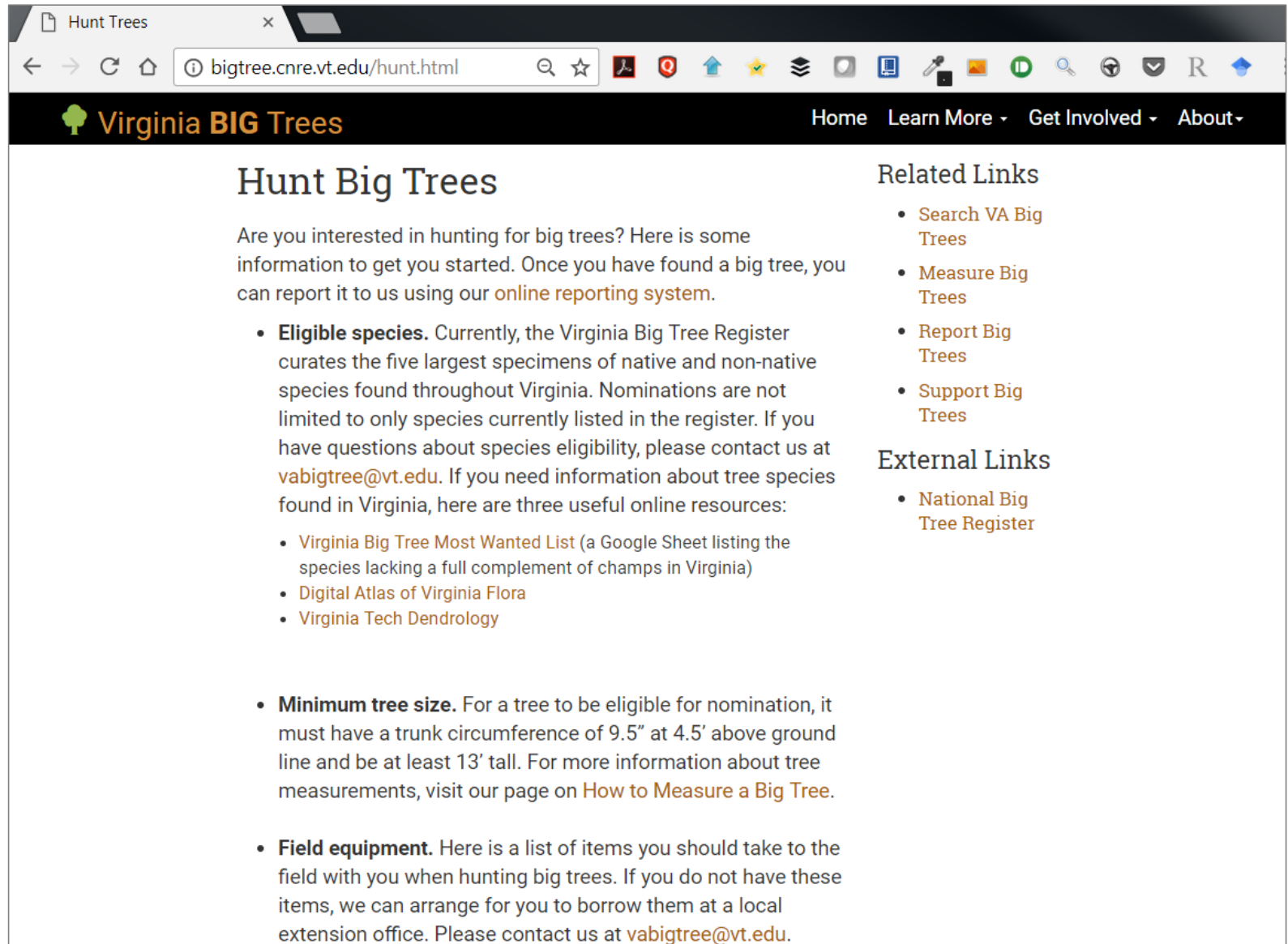
REGISTER

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TAKE HOME



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/hunt.html. The page title is "Virginia BIG Trees" and the navigation menu includes "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". The main heading is "Hunt Big Trees". The text reads: "Are you interested in hunting for big trees? Here is some information to get you started. Once you have found a big tree, you can report it to us using our [online reporting system](#)."

- **Eligible species.** Currently, the Virginia Big Tree Register curates the five largest specimens of native and non-native species found throughout Virginia. Nominations are not limited to only species currently listed in the register. If you have questions about species eligibility, please contact us at vabigtree@vt.edu. If you need information about tree species found in Virginia, here are three useful online resources:
 - [Virginia Big Tree Most Wanted List](#) (a Google Sheet listing the species lacking a full complement of champs in Virginia)
 - [Digital Atlas of Virginia Flora](#)
 - [Virginia Tech Dendrology](#)
- **Minimum tree size.** For a tree to be eligible for nomination, it must have a trunk circumference of 9.5" at 4.5' above ground line and be at least 13' tall. For more information about tree measurements, visit our page on [How to Measure a Big Tree](#).
- **Field equipment.** Here is a list of items you should take to the field with you when hunting big trees. If you do not have these items, we can arrange for you to borrow them at a local extension office. Please contact us at vabigtree@vt.edu.

Related Links

- [Search VA Big Trees](#)
- [Measure Big Trees](#)
- [Report Big Trees](#)
- [Support Big Trees](#)

External Links

- [National Big Tree Register](#)

Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

- **Tree ID Manual**

BACKGROUND

- **Camera**

REGISTER

- **Map/GPS Unit**

MEASURE

- **Tape measurer**

REPORT

- **Yard stick**

ENGAGEMENT

TAKE HOME

Most-Wanted VA Big Trees

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Ac Comments Share

fx | hazel alder

	A	B	C	D
1	Common Name	Latin Name	State Rank	Points
2	balsam fir	Abies balsamea	1	220
3	balsam fir	Abies balsamea	2	
4	balsam fir	Abies balsamea	3	
5	balsam fir	Abies balsamea	4	
6	balsam fir	Abies balsamea	5	
7	Amur maple	Acer ginnala	1	76
8	Amur maple	Acer ginnala	2	
9	Amur maple	Acer ginnala	3	
10	Amur maple	Acer ginnala	4	
11	Amur maple	Acer ginnala	5	
12	striped maple	Acer pensylvanicum	1	94
13	striped maple	Acer pensylvanicum	2	89
14	striped maple	Acer pensylvanicum	3	
15	striped maple	Acer pensylvanicum	4	
16	striped maple	Acer pensylvanicum	5	
17	Ohio buckeye	Aesculus glabra	1	203
18	Ohio buckeye	Aesculus glabra	2	100
19	Ohio buckeye	Aesculus glabra	3	
20	Ohio buckeye	Aesculus glabra	4	
21	Ohio buckeye	Aesculus glabra	5	
22	red buckeye	Aesculus pavia	1	
23	red buckeye	Aesculus pavia	2	
24	red buckeye	Aesculus pavia	3	
25	red buckeye	Aesculus pavia	4	
26	red buckeye	Aesculus pavia	5	

<http://tinyurl.com/VBTPwanted>

Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

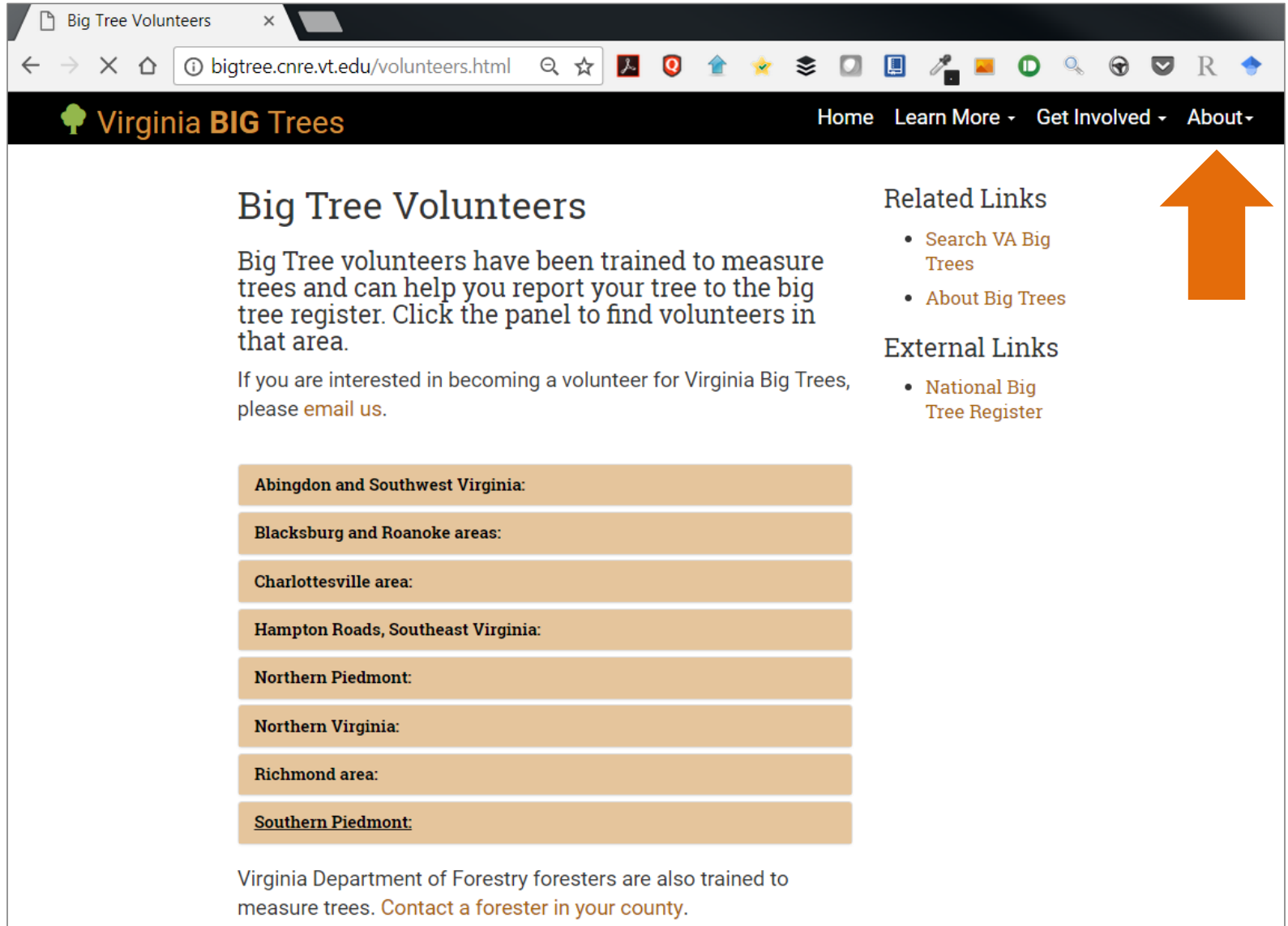
REGISTER

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/volunteers.html". The website header includes the "Virginia BIG Trees" logo and navigation links for "Home", "Learn More", "Get Involved", and "About". The main content area is titled "Big Tree Volunteers" and contains the following text:

Big Tree volunteers have been trained to measure trees and can help you report your tree to the big tree register. Click the panel to find volunteers in that area.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for Virginia Big Trees, please [email us](#).

Below this text is a vertical list of eight tan-colored buttons, each representing a geographic region:

- Abingdon and Southwest Virginia:
- Blacksburg and Roanoke areas:
- Charlottesville area:
- Hampton Roads, Southeast Virginia:
- Northern Piedmont:
- Northern Virginia:
- Richmond area:
- Southern Piedmont:

At the bottom of the page, it states: "Virginia Department of Forestry foresters are also trained to measure trees. [Contact a forester in your county](#)."

On the right side of the page, there are two sections of links:

- Related Links**
 - [Search VA Big Trees](#)
 - [About Big Trees](#)
- External Links**
 - [National Big Tree Register](#)

A large orange arrow points upwards from the "External Links" section towards the "Related Links" section.

Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

MEASURE

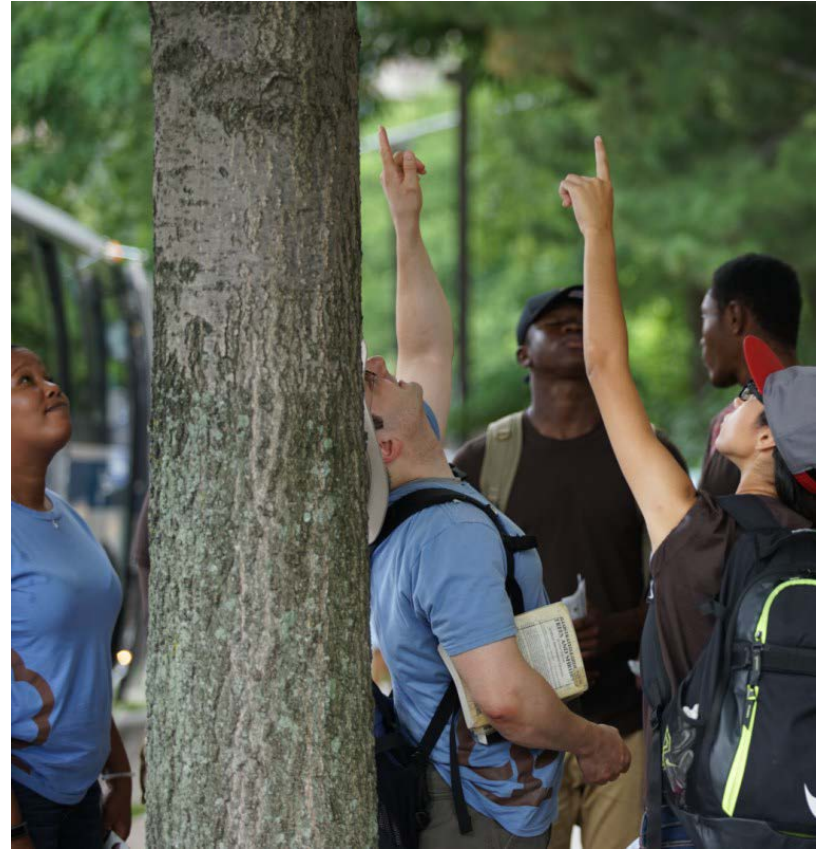
REPORT

ENGAGEMENT

TAKE HOME

Other ways to get involved...

- Youth outreach and education
- Adopt a big tree
- Advocate for big tree preservation
- Suggest 50th anniversary activities for 2020
- Give me your ideas!



<https://treesny.org/youth-education>

Take Home Messages

OVERVIEW

- **Virginia has a vibrant history of big trees from the Chesapeake Bay to the Cumberland Gap**

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

- **The Virginia Big Tree Program strives to document the state's largest trees and educate the public about them**

MEASURE

- **There is a network of dedicated staff and volunteers who help locate, measure, and report big trees**

REPORT

ENGAGEMENT

- **Big trees are charismatic ambassadors for our forests – we must engage ourselves and the public to enhance their recognition and care**

TAKE HOME



Questions and Comments

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Lunchtime Continuing Education Webinar

July 20, 2017

WebEx

