Master Naturalist Opportunities with the Virginia Big Tree Program

Eric Wiseman, PhD
Associate Professor of Urban Forestry
Dept. of Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation
Virginia Tech
arborist@vt.edu
http://urbanforestry.frec.vt.edu

Lunchtime Continuing Education Webinar
July 20, 2017
WebEx
Presentation Overview

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

- Quick tour of the Virginia Big Tree Register

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

- Engagement opportunities for Master Naturalists
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
Spring, 1970

VIRGINIA FORESTS

Magazine

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

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

MEASURE

REPORT

ENGAGEMENT

TAKE HOME

Virginia's largest loblolly pine, located in Drewsville County on the farm of Dr. S. Brown, is 15' 0" in circumference, 128' tall, with a crown spread of 64'.

Virginia Forests, Inc., in cooperation with the Extension Division of 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 an Ag instructor; fill it out and send it to Virginia Forests, Inc., in Richwood. 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 those young people.

From time to time Virginia Forests, Inc., and the VPI Cooperative Extension Division will publish a fact 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 inclusion in the National Register in Washington, D.C., which is kept by the American Forestry Association. At the present time, Virginia has claim to two of America's biggest trees: the loblolly pine and the orange orange. The loblolly pine, in Drewsville County, measures 15'; feet in circumference and 128 feet high. The orange orange tree is more than 300 years old and is located at Red Hill Plantation near Brookeland; where Patrick Henry spent his retirement years. It measures 21 feet in circumference and 70 feet high.
Eric Wiseman named coordinator of Virginia Big Tree Program

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.

Dr. Jeff Kirwan
Professor Emeritus
Virginia Tech

Dr. Eric Wiseman
Tree Geek
Virginia Tech
Big Tree Volunteers
Virginia Big Tree Register

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

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

- Currently no species restrictions for register entry

- 445 species and sub-species are curated currently

- Minimum size eligibility: 9.5” trunk circumference and 13’ height
Virginia Big Tree Register

- 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
Virginia Big Tree Register

- 54 current national champions
- 4th place nationally (CA, TX, FL, VA)
Virginia Big Tree Register

[Website screenshot of Virginia Big Trees with options to search, browse, measure, or report big trees]
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.

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

[Logos of Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Trees Virginia, Virginia Forestry Association, American Forests]
Search Results
You searched for "Virginia National Champions".
54 records were found for your search.
* = State Champ, ** = National Champ

Map results

Click the column header to sort the table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>City or County</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraser fir **</td>
<td>Abies fraseri</td>
<td>City of Harrisonburg</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boxelder **</td>
<td>Acer negundo</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trilobum red maple **</td>
<td>Acer rubrum var.trilobum</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow buckeye **</td>
<td>Aesculus flava</td>
<td>Alleghany</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hazel alder **</td>
<td>Alnus serrulata</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

Virginia BIG Trees

Search Big Trees...
Browse Big Trees...
Measure Big Trees...
Report Big Trees...

Our Partners:
- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Trees Virginia
- Virginia Forestry Association
- American Forests
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

http://www.americanforests.org/explore-forests/americas-biggest-trees/nominate-a-tree/
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

- Eligible tree: ≥9.5” trunk circumference & ≥13’ height
- **Trunk circumference** @ 4.5’ above ground line (inches)
- **Vertical height** from ground line to highest branch (feet)
- **Average crown spread** in two perpendicular planes (feet)

Circumference (1 point per inch) 
+ Height (1 point per foot)
+ Crown Spread (1/4 point per foot)

**Big Tree Score =**
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

A. Measure at 4.5 feet

B. Measure at 4.5 feet

C. 4.5 feet high side

D. Measure at 4.5 feet along axis
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

MEASURE

TAKE HOME

ENGAGEMENT

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
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree
Measuring and Scoring a Big Tree
Reporting a Big Tree

Virginia BIG Trees

Search Big Trees...  Browse Big Trees...  Measure Big Trees...  Report Big Trees...

Our Partners

VirginiaTech  Virginia Cooperative Extension  TREES VIRGINIA  VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION  AMERICAN FORESTS
### Virginia Big Tree Program

**Personal Information**

- First and last name*
- Email address*
- Phone number
- Mailing address

**Permission to display information on website:**

- Yes
- No
- Only the following information may be displayed:

---

### Species name

### Measurements

### Locality name

### Address or GPS

### Owner info

### Measurer info

### Nominator info

### PHOTOS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Reporting a Big Tree

Virginia Big Tree Program
Nomination Form

1. 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: _______________________________________

2. Kind of tree (common name): ___________________ (scientific name): ________________

3. Comments about tree (is it healthy, is it endangered by development, does it have historical significance?):
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. Dimensions of tree (measurement guidelines on page 2): Score calculation:
   Trunk circumference: _____ (inches) Measurement height: ____ (ft)
   Trunk circumference: _____ (1 pt. per inch) + Height: _______ (1 pt. per foot)
   Vertical tree height: _______ (feet) (if other than standard 4.5’)
   + Avg. crown spread: _____ (½ pt. per foot)
   Average crown spread: _____ (feet)
   Method of vertical height measurement: _________________________________ = Total points: ________

5. Directions to tree (describe using major roadways or landmarks that are nearby):
   ___________________________________________________________________

6. County or city where tree is located ___________________________ Sketch map of tree location on owner’s property:
   North: ↑

7. GPS coordinates (please use decimal degrees):
   N ___________________ W ___________________

8. May this nomination be shared publicly?
   Yes: _____________ No: ______________

9. Mail nomination to:
   Virginia Big Tree Program
Engagement Opportunities

OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

REGISTER

MEASURE

REPORT

ENGAGEMENT

Our Partners

VirginiaTech

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Trees Virginia

Virginia Forestry Association

American Forests
Engagement Opportunities

Hunt Big Trees

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

- Tree ID Manual
- Camera
- Map/GPS Unit
- Tape measurer
- Yard stick

http://tinyurl.com/VBTPwanted
Engagement Opportunities

Big Tree Volunteers

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.

Related Links
- Search VA Big Trees
- About Big Trees

External Links
- National Big Tree Register

Abingdon and Southwest Virginia:

Blacksburg and Roanoke areas:

Charlottesville area:

Hampton Roads, Southeast Virginia:

Northern Piedmont:

Northern Virginia:

Richmond area:

Southern Piedmont:

Virginia Department of Forestry foresters are also trained to measure trees. Contact a forester in your county.
Engagement Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

Eric Wiseman, PhD
Associate Professor of Urban Forestry
Dept. of Forest Resources &
Environmental Conservation
Virginia Tech
arborist@vt.edu
http://urbanforestry.frec.vt.edu

Lunchtime Continuing Education Webinar
July 20, 2017
WebEx