

Support the Annual Forest Nursery Seedling Production Report

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The Forest Nursery Seedling Production report is produced annually by employees at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service. It fulfills agency mandates to update the status and trends of the Nation's forest regeneration success and provides valuable information for nurseries and land managers. The willingness of nurseries to volunteer information on tree seedlings that they produce and sell each year is crucial to the production of this report.

The information is published annually in *Tree Planters' Notes* so nurseries and land managers can easily access the data for their own use. Summary tables of tree planting data, by State and over time, allow policy makers to view nursery production trends, which can translate into policy decisions and funding opportunities.

These trends over time have revealed the sensitivity of nursery production to conservation programs and unforeseen events unrelated to forestry, such as the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program leading to historically high demand in tree seedlings while stock market downturns can lead to sharp declines in tree seedling sales. In addition, as data are received, the [National Reforestation and Restoration Directory](#) is updated to facilitate connections between businesses, organizations, and others that support the propagation of forest and native plant materials.

The report is only as useful as the response rate to the annual survey; a low response rate may lead to misleading production numbers. Response rates have ebbed and flowed over the years—it's not a stretch to say that if forest and conservation nursery managers do not respond to the request for information, then the report could not be produced. The authors thank the nurseries who regularly respond to our annual request for information!

These data have been collected for decades by the Forest Service and were published both in *Tree Planters' Notes* and as stand-alone publications—the report has been published annually in *Tree Planters' Notes* since 2012. Prior to 2012 the report was produced sporadically and in different formats. Agency staff are currently locating all existing reports and posting them [to the internet](#).

Safeguarding Business Confidentiality

Production data since 2012 have been procured and maintained by three universities through a contract with the Forest Service: Auburn University, the University of Idaho, and Purdue University. Data files are stored on secure folders at their respective institutions. Data are compiled by State and region and published in *Tree Planters' Notes* without differentiating between private and public sector nurseries. No questions about costs or finances are included in the questionnaire.

Over time, the agency has consistently fielded questions regarding the confidentiality of the survey and how the data are protected. These are valid concerns that likely contribute to a lower response rate. Response rates may also have decreased due to nurseries being inundated with requests for information as reforestation efforts have increased in recent years.

Streamlining the Survey

The annual information request is periodically reviewed by all three participating institutions to ensure that it is delivered consistently across all regions of the United States. Information collected relates directly to the production totals needed to generate the report. Surveys are predominantly completed online to streamline information sharing. Paper surveys are sent only if a nursery does not return the online form or if they indicate their preference for a paper survey.

The participating universities send the survey in the narrow window between wrapping up the current year's planting season and preparing for the forthcoming planting season. The report is published as soon as possible, usually within a year of the questionnaire.

Improving the Usefulness of the Forest Nursery Seedling Production Survey

As the validity of the survey depends on the response rate, here are a few suggestions to help your organization or company complete the survey.

1. Organize your production data so the report can be filled out easily by another member of your staff if necessary.
2. Designate a point of contact at your nursery to respond to the annual inquiry.
 - If the point of contact changes, send updated contact information to the Forest Service representative listed below who covers your region.
3. Share the importance of the survey with your administrative staff.
4. Ask questions if there are concerns regarding how the data will be used or maintained.
 - Please know that data privacy and protection is important to the institutions who are sending the inquiries. Reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

The forest nursery seedling production survey for the 2024 growing year will be sent out in fall 2024 (Southern United States) and early winter 2025 (Western and Eastern United States). For all regions, responses are requested within a 2-month timeframe. If you do not receive the survey, please contact the Forest Service representative in your region:

Eastern States:

Carolyn C. Pike (carolyn.c.pike@usda.gov)

Southern States:

Emily Rhoades (emily.rhoades@usda.gov)

Western States:

Nabil Kaddhuri (nabil.khadduri@usda.gov)

Lastly, the authors recognize your contributions in supporting the ongoing reforestation and restoration work that is happening at an intensity not seen in at least a generation! Thank you for making the world a greener place.

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