

# Non-Timber Forest Products

## Non-Timber Forest Products and Agroforestry

**Agroforestry** is, simply put, the practice of integrating long-term tree crops with annual agriculture crops and/or livestock. This type of integrated agriculture has been successfully practiced for thousands of years in many parts of the world, especially in the tropics. Temperate regions have been a bit slower to adopt agroforestry practices, but in the past decade or so, there has been increasing interest in agroforestry. Use of a long-term tree crop with an annual agricultural crop and/or livestock tends to make the entire farm more sustainable, both from increasing crop diversity and protecting the soil and water.

There are five commonly accepted practices for temperate agroforestry. These are **alley cropping**, **silvopasture**, **riparian buffer strips**, **windbreaks**, and **forest farming**. While alley cropping, windbreaks, riparian buffer strips, and silvopasture may introduce trees into open habitats that are treeless, forest farming starts with a woods and manages it in such a way to produce either short-term (relative to timber production) or annual non-timber forest products.

Most woodland owners or farmers who have woods on their property are not enthusiastic about planting trees in their open areas or implementing new projects that may require time and money without showing a quick return on their investment. It is important to note that each agroforestry practice can and should be customized to meet your personal objectives and work effectively on your land. Since introducing trees is basic to all the agroforestry practices except forest farming, it takes months or years for these systems to develop fully. Forest farming is the one agroforestry technique in which an owner could expect to see some marketable product within a year or two.

In succeeding issues of this magazine, we will discuss in greater detail each of the agroforestry practices and how they might best be adapted to existing agricultural practices here in Kentucky. With the exception of forest farming, all of the practices are straightforward conceptually. Agroforestry practices are advantageous to the landowner both economically and ecologically and should be seriously considered by any landowner who is interested in managing his or her land in a more sustainable way.

There are two Web sites that may be of interest to prospective agroforesters: The Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri ([www.centerforagroforestry.org](http://www.centerforagroforestry.org)) and the National Agroforestry Center in Nebraska (<http://www.unl.edu/nac/>). Both of these organizations have print and video/DVD materials on each of the agroforestry techniques.

Author:

**Deborah B. Hill, Ph.D.**

Forestry Extension Professor and forestry extension specialist at the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry responsible primarily for programs in non-timber forest products. She also works with 4H and youth, and in the areas of urban forestry, agroforestry, and permaculture. She has developed landowner programs in Christmas tree and shiitake mushroom production.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 210 Thomas Poe Cooper Bldg., Lexington, KY 40546-0073, E-mail: [dbhill@uky.edu](mailto:dbhill@uky.edu), Phone: 859.257.7610, Fax: 859.323.1031



*Alley cropping*

*Photo by Deborah B. Hill*



*Silvopasture*

*Missouri Center for Agroforestry*



*Riparian buffer*

*Missouri Center for Agroforestry*



*Windbreaks*  
National Agroforestry Center,  
<http://ncrs.fs.fed.us/res/sites/nac/>



*Forest farming*

*Photo by Deborah B. Hill*