



Kentucky Tree Farm Committee Newsletter

Celebrating an Outstanding Kentucky Tree Farmer

by Cary Perkins, Chair of the Kentucky Tree Farm Committee

Charlie Williams is known around Munfordville in Hart County as “the Tree Man.” He has lived up to his nickname by planting thousands of trees since he was 15 years old. Mr. Williams owns 1,155 acres of land in Hart County, which includes 925 acres of woods. He is one of a handful of Kentucky landowners who is certified as a Golden Tree Farmer (50+ years in the program); his woodland has been a glowing example of sustainable forestry and exemplary land use for more than fifty years. Having been named Kentucky Tree Farmer of the Year in 2006, Mr. Williams has, in each of the past two years, been a finalist for the coveted designation of North Central Regional Tree Farmer of the Year for the central portion of the United States. In 2011, he also received the Arbor Day Foundation's national Good Steward Award which "recognizes landowners who practice sustainability on private lands from which others can learn."

Mr. Williams has a life-long connection to the land. It goes far beyond what could ever be detailed in this short space. He has planted trees every spring for the past 36 years. For more than 50 years, he has selectively harvested timber on every acre of his 925 acres of woods, utilizing a "bottom-grading" system in which only dying, defective, or poor quality trees are harvested. This approach improves the health and vigor of the remaining trees and the forest for the future. Many areas of his property have been harvested in this manner several times as well as having had Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) done. He has even bought and erected an old surplus Division of Forestry fire tower on a knoll near his house from which he can overview his entire property. He has documented 46 different recre-

ational activities from fishing to fire-tower sitting that his friends and family have done on his tree farm.

Mr. Williams uses Best Management Practices in everything that he does. He has an extensive cave system underneath the property and has been very careful to tailor all of his land uses to practices that will protect the organisms that call it home. He is implementing a complete wildlife plan developed by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources as well as a Forest Stewardship Plan

developed in cooperation with the Kentucky Division of Forestry. His Tree Farm is designated as a Stewardship Forest, and he was named the 2005 Kentucky Forest Steward of the Year. A professional forester supervises the woodland work, and Mr. Williams has also participated in numerous projects in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

As the former Munfordville City Attorney, Mr. Williams has been very active not only in promoting good forestry but in promoting trees and their benefits far beyond his own property. He has hosted numerous farm tours, particularly for school children, to talk about the benefits of trees. He has lobbied the Kentucky legislature for stronger timber trespass

laws and spent his legal career vigorously prosecuting loggers engaged in timber trespass. He has also traveled to Washington, DC to meet and lobby Kentucky's congressional delegation regarding the importance of issues concerning Kentucky's woodland owners. He is an active member of the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association. Charlie Williams is an outstanding Tree Farmer and a wonderful example of the impact one person, with the help of family, friends, and professional foresters, can have.



Photo courtesy: Cary Perkins

Mr. Charlie Williams has been practicing woodland management on his Tree Farm in Hart County for many years. He is one of the few Tree Farmers in Kentucky that have earned the designation of Golden Tree Farmer meaning he has been in the American Tree Farm System program for more than 50 years. Mr. Williams received the national Arbor Day Foundation Good Steward Award for his years of work and has been a finalist for the regional Tree Farmer of the Year Award for the last two years. His positive impact extends well beyond his Hart County Tree Farm.