

Establishment and Management of Seed Orchards

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It seems that there is very little that can be added to the theory of seed orchard establishment and management. A search of the literature during the past few years indicates that every possible angle has been covered and contradicted. Rather than rehash this information that is available and familiar to all of you, I will discuss our experience with seed orchards. Each organization dabbling in seed orchards has its peculiar problems and situations which must be met in their own way so that what works best for one may not be best for another. Such things as available labor, sites, money, foresters' ingenuity or lack of it, all influence what each organization has done and is doing.

I must interject here that we have worked with the University of Florida's Cooperative program and owe much to them for their guidance. If Drs. Perry and Wang take exception to some of my statements, I hope they will kindly do so.

The obvious place to begin is with the site. Ours is a 45 acre upland hardwood site completely surrounded with hardwood drains. These drains are invaluable as isolation strips as well as fire barriers. The nearest slash pine is over one half mile away. The site is nearly in the center of a 40, 000 acre tract under fence and locked gates. There are some drawbacks to its location but fire hazard and molesting by unauthorized persons are not among them. We first planned to place the orchard at our nursery, but we would have had to cut many acres of excellent young slash pine stands to get even a meager amount of isolation.

In order to clear the site, all merchantable wood was utilized and then the brush and stumps were cut with a K-G blade mounted on a D-8 tractor, the debris was piled and burned, and then the area was harrowed three times with a Rome offset harrow. After this treatment the area was nearly as clean as an old field. A fence 7 feet high was built in order to keep out deer as well as hogs. A soil analysis at this point indicated that the soil was low in all nutrients, at least by agricultural standards, and the PH slightly over 6. The soil is loamy sand 2-3 feet thick over sandy clay and moist but not wet. The site index for slash pine is about 90 and about 100 for loblolly pine.

Our first 200 potted grafted slash pine plants were planted in August of 1956 at a spacing of 30 feet by 30 feet. They were watered several times but in spite of an abnormally dry early winter no trees were lost until they started

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