



*Gena Todia stands beside the 2013
Champion Slash Pine in Mobile County
she co-nominated with Fred Nation.*

Champion Trees

By Brian Hendricks, Registered Forester, Champion Tree/FIA Coordinator
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The results are in, and it appears that the popularity of Alabama's *Champion Tree* program continues to be at a high level. A total of 27 trees were nominated for 2013, and there are 12 new champions! With the addition of these new trees (and eliminating those champions that have died), Alabama now has a total of 143 champion trees.

Of the new trees, there were five that defeated a 2012 champion including: pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), overcup oak (*Quercus lyrata*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), and slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*). Four of the trees filled vacancies for species that did not have a current champion, including: hazel alder (*Alnus serrulata*), red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), and winged sumac (*Rhus copallina*). Three others tied as co-champions with current champions as their total scores are in such close proximity to each other: American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), post oak (*Quercus stellata*), and American plum (*Prunus Americana*).

The purpose of the *Champion Tree* program is to discover, recognize, and preserve the largest tree of each species in Alabama. Anyone can nominate a tree for *Champion Tree* designation; however, an Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) forester is responsible for collecting the tree's measurements.

When determining a champion, three of the tree's components are taken into consideration: circumference, height, and crown spread. The formula used to determine the size of a tree is as follows: one point for each inch of circumference, plus one point for each foot of height, plus one point for each four feet of the average crown spread.

For a tree to be eligible for the *Champion Tree* program it must be a species that is recognized as native or naturalized in Alabama. A naturalized tree is an "introduced" species that has established itself in the wild, reproducing naturally and spreading.

Once a new champion is identified, both its owner and nominator receive a certificate. AFC county personnel present the nominator with a permanent tree marker that is placed in proximity to the base of the tree. New champions are added to the *Champion Trees of Alabama* publication which can be found on the AFC website at: www.forestry.alabama.gov.

If you know of a tree that you think might be the largest of its species in the state, you are encouraged to send in a nomination. To complete a nomination form on-line, visit the AFC website and click on the "Champion Tree Program" fast link found on the home page. Nomination forms are also available in county AFC offices that can be mailed or faxed. Although nominations may be sent in year-round, they must be received by the program coordinator no later than June 1, 2014, for a tree to be eligible for *Champion Tree* designation in 2014. Before sending a nomination, you are strongly encouraged to review the measurements of the current champion to get an idea if the candidate tree's score has a chance of defeating it. After all, there are millions of "big" trees in Alabama, but to be a CHAMPION it must be THE BIGGEST!

For more information about the AFC's *Champion Tree* program, contact Brian Hendricks by telephone at (334) 240-9370 or email at Brian.Hendricks@forestry.alabama.gov.

Congratulations to all of the nominators and owners of the 12 new champions for 2013 listed below!

TREE SPECIES	COUNTY	NOMINATOR	OWNER
Alder, Hazel	Talladega	John McBride	Allen McBride
Beech, American	Jackson	C. John Brewer	C. John Brewer
Buckeye, Red	Wilcox	Tommy Lawler	Tommy & Jeanell Lawler
Cypress, Pond	Mobile	Gena Todia & Fred Nation	Alabama State Port Authority
Maple, Silver	Jackson	Josh Angel & Adam Ziegenbein	Ron & Dianne Lee
Oak, Live	Mobile	Mayor Donald E. Nelson	Sandy Howard
Oak, Overcup	Dallas	Tom Wasmer	Tom Wasmer
Oak, Post	Chilton	Lee Roy Dennis	Lee Roy Dennis
Oak, White	Colbert	Darryl Rutland	Jeff Mitchell
Pine, Slash	Mobile	Gena Todia & Fred Nation	Alabama State Port Authority
Plum, American	Talladega	John McBride	Camp Mac
Sumac, Winged	Talladega	John McBride	Camp Mac