



# Hardwood Initiative

*Improving Hardwood Forests for Future Generations*

Forestry Topic 61

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## What is the Hardwood Initiative?

Virginia’s hardwood initiative is focused on growing and sustaining healthy hardwood forests for future generations. Through direct support and expert guidance from Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) foresters, this initiative helps landowners grow enduring hardwood forests.

Hardwood trees, also known as deciduous trees, have broad leaves that drop each fall. Common hardwoods include oak, yellow-poplar and maple, and feature wood that’s generally denser and harder (hence the name, hardwood).

In contrast, softwood, or coniferous trees such as pine, hemlock and spruce, have needle-like leaves year-round, which is why they are sometimes called “evergreen” trees.

Hardwood forests currently make up roughly 80% of Virginia’s forestland, but they are in decline due to lack of proper management. The hardwood initiative aims to fix this by providing landowners the tools to manage and improve their land.

### The Hard(wood) Facts

The majority of Virginia’s hardwood forests today are high in oak populations. Oaks are known as “cornerstone” species because they support more life-forms than any other North American tree genus. Healthy oak populations are the foundation of our thriving hardwood forests.

For the last several decades, most hardwood forests haven’t received management needed for new oaks to grow (regenerate). Without statewide hardwood management improvement, our hardwood forests will continue to decline.

Together, we can stop and even reverse this decline through the implementation of best practices. In addition to improving our forests, activities that facilitate tree regeneration are often beneficial to game and other wildlife.

## What Does the Initiative Offer?

VDOF foresters and consulting foresters work closely with landowners to discuss ownership goals (e.g., wildlife



## Why Focus on Hardwoods?

Essential for many reasons, hardwood trees:

- ◆ Provide a valuable timber resource due to the strong and diverse forest products industry in Virginia (e.g., furniture, flooring, cabinets, pallets, railroad ties, barrels and fine paper.)
- ◆ Provide valuable wildlife food (fruits, nuts and tender shoots), shelter and nesting habitat.
- ◆ Protect watersheds by filtering water, providing clean air, and capturing and storing large amounts of carbon.
- ◆ Exhibit outstanding scenic views, fall foliage and outdoor recreation opportunities.

habitat, game hunting and commercial harvesting), perform forest assessments and make management recommendations based on the data and desired outcomes.

When the time is right, forestry professionals and related experts can help landowners carry out recommendations. While cost-share assistance may be available for some activities, all recommendations will improve the forest for the landowner, wildlife and the Commonwealth.

For more information about services or programs in your area, contact your local DOF office:

**[www.DOF.Virginia.gov](http://www.DOF.Virginia.gov)**



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