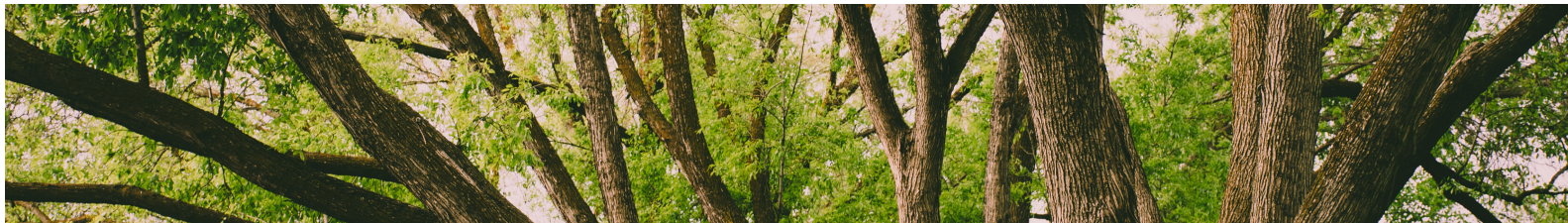




THE OVERSTORY

MSU Forestry Extension Newsletter



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Stay Strong, Stay Healthy

John Auel, Extension Specialist

Greetings from Forestry Extension,

We hope that everyone is doing well during this difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with those individuals and families that are dealing directly with COVID-19, as well as those dealing with the aftermath of the recent tornado outbreaks. Like most people in the state, the Forestry Extension group is also working remotely. While in-person programming and site visits are restricted, you can still contact us for help with any forestry issues. On the last page of this publication is a list of Extension Forestry Specialists and their respective contact information. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

We will increase our use of social media and on-line educational meetings, as well as newsletters like this one, to reach as many of you as possible with forestry related information. We have posted salvage and safety tips on Facebook for dealing with tornado damaged trees, and are beginning to offer some programs through WebEx, Zoom, and other related platforms. We will send notices out to clientele and county agents as we develop these programs.

In an effort to gauge current forest industry activity, we have within the last week gathered information from consultants, loggers, landowners, and industry representatives. The term that we hear a lot is "Uncertainty". We have been advised that a number of mills have placed quotas on incoming wood due to limited or suspended operations, while others, typically the paper mills, are operating normally. In most cases, with the one exception being paper Mills, this has adversely affected stumpage rates for landowners and limited opportunities for loggers. Hopefully, this uncertainty will be short termed and conditions will improve once the governor feels it is safe to resume activity in the state.

MSU Extension has created a webpage to assist business owners with the new government assistance programs. Additionally, landowners may find some relief through new tax programs designed to benefit individuals during this crisis. More information can be found at the link below:

<http://extension.msstate.edu/content/financial-and-economic-information-and-resources-for-small-businesses>

We urge you to continue to follow the advice of state officials until they determine we can once again continue business as usual, safely. Together, we can get through this difficult time. Everyone in Extension is here to help in any way we can.

On behalf of the Forestry Extension Group, please stay safe.

John B. Auel, Assistant Extension Professor, Department of Forestry, MSU

Mississippi Timber Price Report

Marc Measells, Extension Associate III

1st Quarter, 2020

The Mississippi Timber Price Report provides a picture of timber market activity across the state showing regional and statewide stumpage prices for common forest products. **This report should only be used as a guide to help individuals monitor timber market trends. The average price should not be applied as fair market value for a specific timber sale because many variables influence actual prices individuals landowners receive.** This report and previous historical timber prices are available by contacting your local county Extension office or at:

www.extension.msstate.edu/forestry/forest-economics/timber-prices.

Quarter's Prices: 1st-Quarter 2020 Stumpage Prices/Ton (Source: MSU Extension)

NOTE: Prices vary widely across the state; average prices presented here may not reflect your local market.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Pine Sawtimber - \$20.94 | Mixed Hardwood Sawtimber- \$33.83 |
| Pine Chip N Saw - \$12.90 | Hardwood Pulpwood - \$6.67 |
| Pine Pulpwood - \$4.94 | Oak Sawtimber - \$43.34 |
| Pine Poles - \$37.17 | Crossties - Insufficient Data |

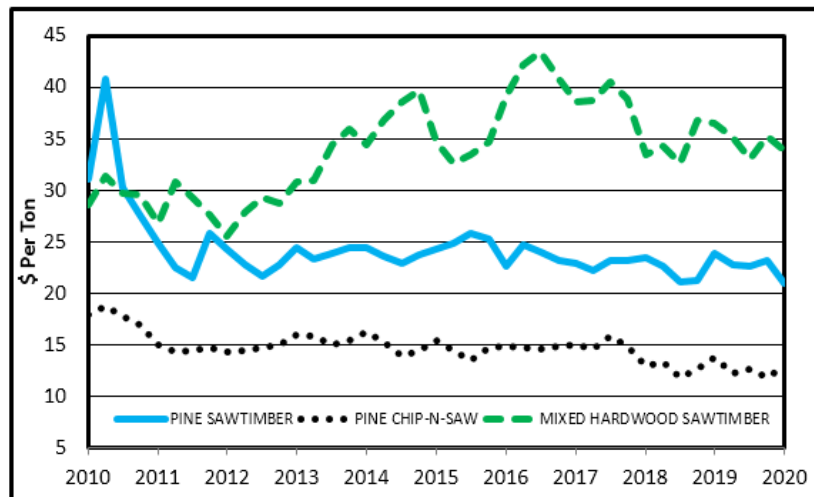
Price Trends:

Things were going well during the first two months of 2020, housing starts were up, unemployment low, and the economy was doing well. But then COVID-19 hit and in general the forest product industry, like others, have seen reductions and delays in capital expenditures. However, paper products such as toilet paper and paper towels are in great demand and the forest industry has continued to increase these products moving from the commercial sector to the domestic sector. Thus, Paper Mills are increasing their demand on pulpwood.

Figures 1 and 2 reflect 10-year statewide average price trends. Compared to 4th quarter 2019, statewide average prices decreased for most product classes except pine chip-n-saw and pine pulpwood. The reduction in demand and our oversupply issue are main contributors to low stumpage prices. North Mississippi prices continue to trail south Mississippi prices because of fewer paper mills. The housing market, while starting 2020 strong, has been dramatically reduced. Additionally, international demand for our forest products continue to suffer impacts from tariffs and now because of transportation issues.

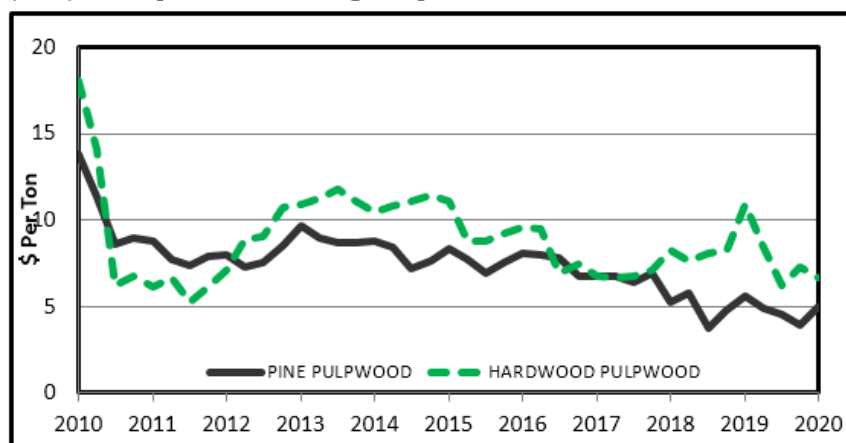
Until this pandemic is over, expect to see prices decrease. Hopefully the pandemic will end soon, and timber prices will rebound quickly. Most forecasts expect a rapid positive response once it is over. In the meantime, please practice social distancing and stay healthy.

Figure 1: Average Mississippi pine sawtimber, pine chip-n-saw, and mixed hardwood sawtimber stumpage prices (\$/ton) for 1st quarter 2010 through 1st quarter 2020.*



*Prices from 2010-2017 are from Timber Mart-South. 2018-current prices are from Mississippi State University Extension.

Figure 2: Average Mississippi pine and hardwood pulpwood stumpage prices (\$/ton) for 1st quarter 2010 through 1st quarter 2020.*



*Prices from 2010-2017 are from Timber Mart-South. 2018-current prices are from Mississippi State University Extension.

*Timber-Mart South (TMS), Inc. has more detailed data available by subscription that contains values for other timber products not included in this report. TMS is compiled and produced at the Center for Forest Business, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, under contract with the Frank W. Norris Foundation, a non-profit corporation serving the forest products industry.

See <http://WWW.TMARTSOUTH.COM>
for information on subscriptions.

Photo Contest

Randy Rousseau, Extension Specialist

Well, we're back with a reinstated version of the Mississippi State University Forestry Extension publication, The Overstory. The new version will focus on an effort to keep forest landowners across the state aware of the most current information available concerning forest markets, provide subject matter you would like us to cover, and inclusion of a question and answer segment.

During this period where County Forestry Association meetings, Field Days, as well as Short Courses and Workshops are being cancelled or postponed for an undetermined period, we will be trying to bring you information through a variety of outlets.

To kick off the return of The Overstory, we are holding a Photo Contest for both Adults (16 and above) and Kids (5 to 15). Send a picture of your favorite tree and why it is your favorite to Randy Rousseau at (rjr84@msstate.edu) or Laura Terry at (let181@msstate.edu) by May 15, 2020. The photos will be judged by a panel of three individuals. The top prize for adults will be a polo shirt with the Mississippi State Dept. of Forestry logo, 2nd and 3rd place will also receive gifts from the Department of Forestry. The top prize for the children will be a MSU T-shirt of their choosing; 2nd and 3rd place prizes will be appropriate for the winner's age, also from the Department of Forestry..

*Photos: Randy Rousseau
and Canva*



Colors of Spring

Brady Self, Extension Specialist

With everything happening in the world around us, one of the pleasures not put on hold is that of taking a walk in the woods. Obviously, its spring and nature is coming to life! Everyone is familiar with new leaves greening the horizon, lawn growth resulting in the sound of lawnmowers together with the smell of fresh cut grass, and the emergence of flowers accompanied by the sound of pollinators going about their busy lives. However, many people don't take time to observe that trees produce some beautiful flowers across the landscape too.

Often, if one is attentive this time of year, even a short walk down a trail, field edge, or through the forest can yield picturesque views of flowering trees. While all trees bloom (remember that pine pollen...), several produce flowers known for their aesthetic traits that provide splashes of color in the forest. Several of these are well known and sought out, others not so much. Two of the more well-known flowering tree species are also some of the first to bloom in the spring. Eastern redbud, with its pink to purple blooms, is well known and often planted as a landscaping tree either in pure or cultivar form. Flowering dogwood is another early bloomer. However, its "blooms" are somewhat misleading. The showy white (sometimes pink) "petals" that signify the beginning of turkey season for some, are actually bracts (modified leaf) with actual flowers being small, inconspicuous and greenish-yellow.

Three other tree/shrub species bearing spring flowers of equal beauty come to mind. Southern magnolia produces flowers that we all know by sight; however, most aren't aware that its cousin, the yellow poplar (also called tuliptree), produces some very attractive flowers as well. These yellow-green flowers smell faintly of vanilla and are sometimes hard to view but can typically be found broken out of treetops after storms. Red buckeye is another showy spring species and possess dark red tubular flowers that can be spotted in low-lying bottomland sites. Finally, bigleaf snowbell is a showy white-flowered larger shrub whose sweet scent often alerts one before the flowers are seen. These, and other flowering tree species, are spread across the landscape and viewing them is well worth a walk in the woods.



*Yellow Poplar
Photo: Brady Self*



*Left: Bigleaf Snowbell, Right: Red Buckeye
Photos: Brady Self*

From Forestry to Champion Knife Builder

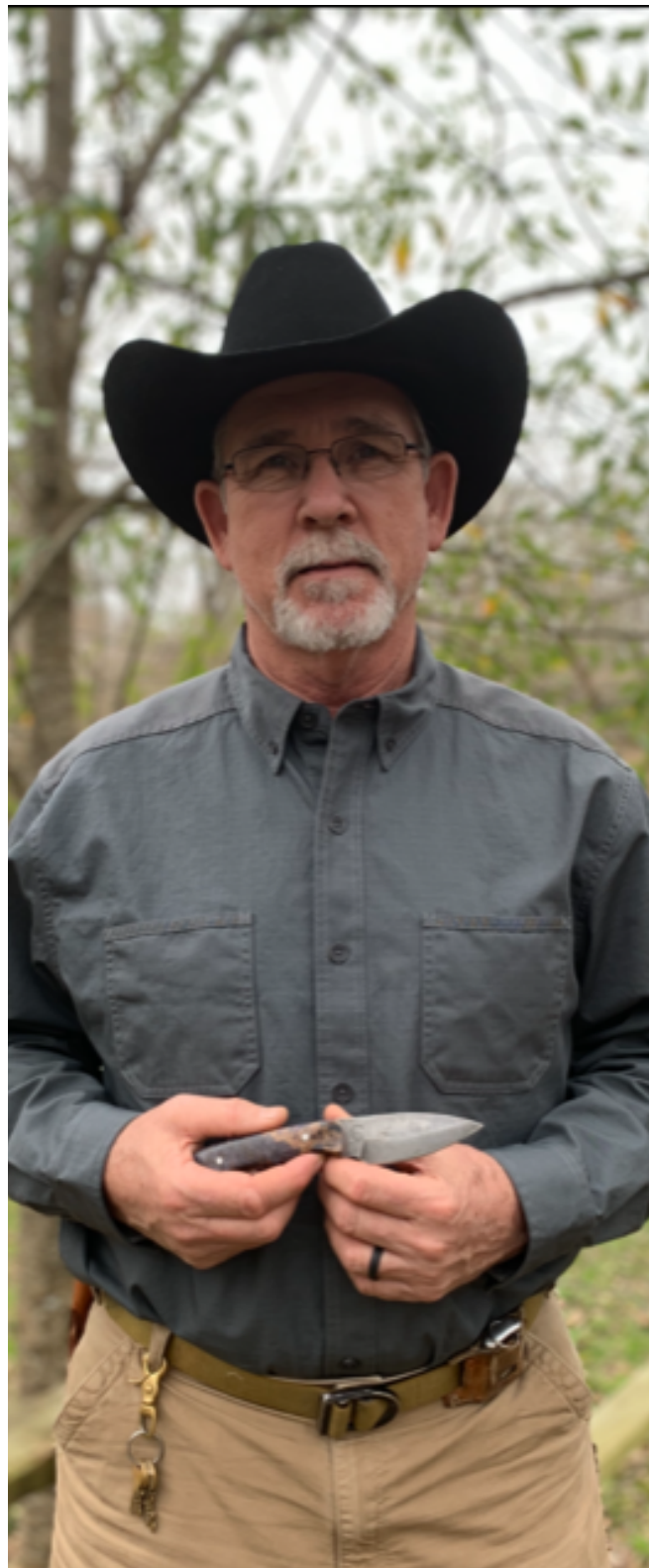
Randy Rousseau, Extension Hardwood Specialist

We never know when a door may open allowing us to take a different path in our lives. How many of us would not only step through that door, but have the determination to follow it, excel, and treasure what we discover along the way. I came across such a person during recent conversations with a number of consultants about the current forestry situation in southwest Mississippi. This led me to Randy Caston. During our talk he mentioned that he had been out of forestry due to a combination of events. His story was something that I wanted to share with others and just maybe one of us will think twice when a new pathway, like Randy's, opens in our life.

Randy started his forestry career in 1982 with Buffalo Wood Inc., located in Centreville, MS, where he was procuring shortwood. Throughout the following years, he marked timber tracts, worked crews that cut and hauled pulpwood, and supervised tree-length logging crews. Five years later, he took and passed the exam at Mississippi State that allowed him to become a registered forester. This provided Randy the opportunity to start his first company known as Timber & Wildlife Management Inc., which was a construction and timber company. He enjoyed working with private landowners as it provided him the opportunity to help landowners with their forestry and wildlife management. In 1994, he bought out a logger that was going out of the business and took over the crew. His logging and management business flourished and led to managing over 30,000 acres over southwest Mississippi and southeast part of Louisiana. But, Randy wasn't finished and started a second company known as, Mix-Wood Timber Inc., which was a trucking company moving wood to mills as well as finished lumber over a four state area including Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Things began to slow for his business and within four years he sold all of his logging equipment and trucks. He continued to focus his attention on consulting forestry. Unfortunately, Randy lost one of his two sisters in 2015 and one year later lost the other sister. Shortly thereafter, his only brother had heart surgery and Randy decided it was time for him to get out of forestry and retire.

This is not the end of the story as his life took another turn. While watching the History channel he became interested in the show "Forged in Fire". What caught his attention was that the show featured some of the best blade smiths from all over the U.S. in competition to determine who could build the best. The more he watched, the more it interested him and finally he convinced himself that he could build a really superb knife. The next day he began working in his shop focused on building a knife. Although he built one, he confesses "that it didn't look like much, but it was a knife". Over the next year and a half, he became immersed in learning everything he could about what it takes to build an impressive knife. In late 2018, he was invited to compete in the show that first drew his attention "Forged in Fire". Today, he stated that it was one of the hardest things he had ever undertaken. He competed against three other blade smiths through a number of steps and even had to make a fantasy blade from a meteorite, which had to be both strong and sharp. The blade Randy formed from the meteorite got him into the finals where he forged a sword known as "Attila the Hun, Sword of Mars". (cont. on next page)



Randy Caston
Photo: Randy Caston

THE OVERSTORY

This type of sword was originally introduced in 405AD, but his replica still had to make it through the tests for sharpness and strength. Randy's sword propelled him to the winners circle becoming the Forged in Fire Champion on June 6, 2019. Today, Randy makes one of a kind blades and sells them all over the United States. He has recently built a knife for the Mississippi Loggers Association which will be raffled off later this year with proceeds going to help kids in the "Log a Load for Kids". In March of 2020, he made the cover of the Mississippi Loggers Association magazine.

Your first thought might be that Randy has accomplished what he set out to do and making the occasional specialty knife would fulfill his life but, you would be wrong! Today Randy is back into forestry consulting. As he stated, "forestry is my blood and a way of life for me". Yet, he also loves making one of a kind blades and hopes that he can do both for many more years. It is our hope that Randy can continue to follow his dreams for as long as he wants and that all of us can hopefully follow our dreams.

*Knives made by Randy Caston
Photo: Randy Caston*



Life and Stories that Come to Mind and Make Us Smile

Randy Rousseau, Extension Hardwood Specialist

With everything going on lately and the need for social distancing providing a little more time to think about those things that have happened during our life, there are quite a few stories that come to mind. Some should not even be repeated and others were extremely frustrating at the time but seem today to be very funny. The first one for me in my near 40 years of working in forestry happened the very first year that I started working in the industry following the completion of my doctorate from Mississippi State. I was hired by Westvaco, which at that time was a large pulp and paper manufacturer that was primarily located on the East Coast. Fortunately for me, they also employed a rather large research group at each one of their regions. I found myself located in the Central Region where I was in charge of researching fast-growing alluvial hardwoods. As a scientist, you were provided technicians to assist you in your work. This turned out to be either good or bad depending on the luck of the draw, but that is another long list of stories. When things demanded a larger crew, you were allowed to hire outside crews to help get the job completed.

My first week on the job I found out that I inherited a sycamore progeny test that had been sown earlier on beds at a nearby nursery. Well, I knew what sycamore seedlings looked like, since my major professor was Dr. Sam "Sycamore" Land. However, when I got to the nursery and was shown the beds where the seed had been sown, all I saw was what appeared to be a very beautiful thick lawn of green grass. Getting down on my knees to look further, really I was starting to pray that I would not find a single seedling, I began to find seedlings mixed in with all that thick grass. At that time, there were no herbicides that could be sprayed over the top of the beds to kill the weeds while not also killing the sycamore seedlings. This meant hand weeding was the only way to save the progeny with every origin intact. However, it was also plain to see that the situation called for a larger crew.

The company was able to get me a crew, albeit one from a prison, from a regional facility located in southern Illinois. This was my first time with a prison crew, but not my last, and I really didn't know what to expect, other than extra hands would certainly help. However, this meant I needed to be there when they were working to make sure that they didn't mistakenly pull up a seedling for a weed. I think there is a proverb that goes something like this, but I digress. Being around them they talked a lot about getting out of lockup for the most part ready to return to the "City", which I learned was Chicago. *(cont. on next page)*



One day, while everyone was working I found myself among the prison crew helping out and soon found myself involved in a conversation. Somehow, someway the discussion got around to the amount of education that everyone had and since I was right there they asked me. I told them high school, two degrees from one university and one degree from another. They looked a little bit uncertain and finally one said “so what is that in years” and I replied about 20 years. That’s when the fellow across from me started hysterically laughing and rolled back against the other bed still laughing. When his laughing finally died down, I asked him what he thought was so funny. He replied that he had only finished the 6th grade yet he and I had the same job, which sent the entire crew into laughter. While I was smiling and laughing with them on the outside, I wasn’t happy on the inside. But, like most things there are always stories that stick with you and make you smile when things are not going well.

Photo: Canva

Got a question? Want us to cover something specific?

Send us a message on Facebook, or email rjr84@msstate.edu to submit your questions, comments, or ideas for future articles in The Overstory!

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EXTENSION

We are an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

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MSU-ES Region Map

