



Alabama's CHAMPION TREE Program

By *Brian Hendricks*, Champion Tree Program Coordinator, Alabama Forestry Commission

The Champion Tree program is once again alive and well in Alabama! Because trees and forests are such a big part of Alabama's landscape and economy, State Forester Linda Casey has emphasized the importance of recognizing "champion" trees via the Champion Tree program.

The purpose of the Champion Tree program is to discover, recognize, and preserve the largest of each tree species in Alabama. Currently, there are more than 100 champion trees in Alabama; 23 new champion trees were recognized in 2007.

Anyone can nominate a tree for this program by completing a nomination form; however, an Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) forester or forestry specialist is responsible for collecting the tree's measurements. When determining a champion tree, three of the tree's aspects 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 either 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, its owner and nominator receive certificates, and the nominator is presented with a permanent tree marker by AFC county personnel that is to be placed in proximity to the base of the tree. County personnel are encouraged to publicize the tree marker presentation.

To learn more about the Champion Tree program, visit the AFC's website. There, you will find useful information about the program and a current listing of all Alabama champion trees. ☪

This Swamp Chestnut Oak (Quercus michauxii) is the newest champion tree in Cleburne County, nominated in 2007 by Jake Holloway. AFC Forestry Specialist James Barker is shown with marker that will be installed near base of the tree.