

TREE TIPS

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR WOODS

Have you just purchased or inherited land? If your land includes lots of trees, here are some important things to know.



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Get help from an expert

You can ask for help from:

- North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (free)
- North Carolina Division of Forest Resources (free)

You can find their phone numbers by looking in the North Carolina state government pages in your local phone book. You can also hire a consulting forester. Although consulting foresters charge for their services, their help is worth the price!



Take a walk in the woods

It is important to be familiar with your land before you ask for expert help. Walk through your woods. Talk with your new neighbors. Here are questions to help you learn about your land:

- Is your land hilly or flat?
- Are the trees big or small?
- Do most of the trees have needles (pines) or leaves (hardwoods)?
- Are the trees in rows or naturally scattered?
- Are there streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, or other water?
- Do you see signs of animals living in your woods?
- What other useful things do you see in the woods: is there pine straw, a good picnic spot or campsite, berries and nuts, or walking trails?
- Are there roads near your woods? Or a road through your woods?
- What was your land used for before?

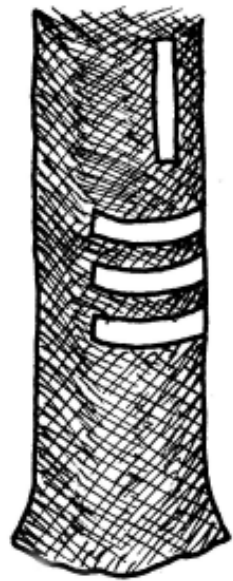
Ask your neighbors if they remember timber harvests, hunting, or other activities on your land.



hardwood



signs of animals



witness tree

Know your boundaries

Do you know where your land ends and someone else's land begins? The corners of your land may be marked by:

- Trees with three slashes (called witness trees)
- Some type of metal stake or pipe
- Piles of rocks, or piles of rocks with a stake

Check if your neighbors recently had a "survey" and will show you the map of their land.

Make sure that people know to ask your permission before using your woods. "Post" your property by putting up "no hunting" or "no trespassing" signs every 100 - 150 yards along the boundaries.



metal stake or pipe



pile of rocks



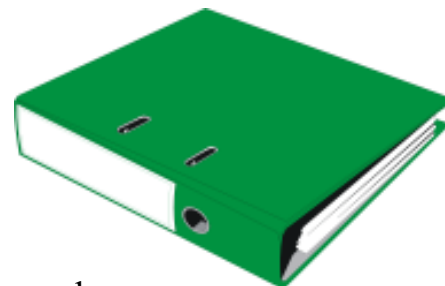
pile of rocks with stake

Keep records of everything

Good records will help you make choices about your land and could help you reduce your taxes one day. Keep all of your papers together in a notebook or file.

What papers should you keep?

- Receipts, bills, and letters (Write down what you bought or sold, how much of it, and who you bought it from or sold it to.)
- Maps
- Copies of checks or money orders (These are easier to keep track of than cash.)
- Photos of your woods
- All other important papers, like management plans and agreements.

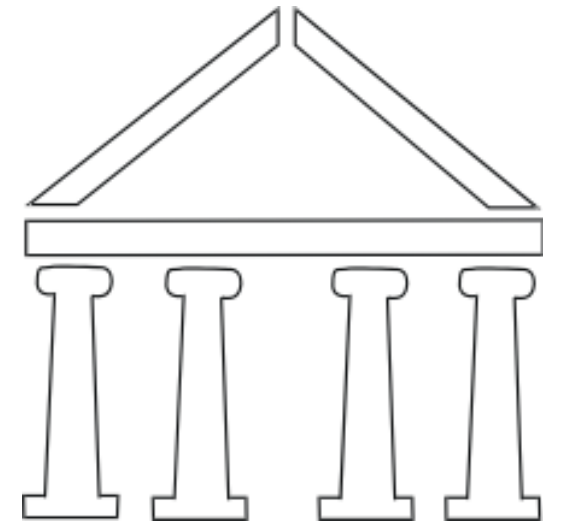


Sign a written agreement with anyone who uses your land or works on your land. Be sure to pay your property tax bill!

Get information

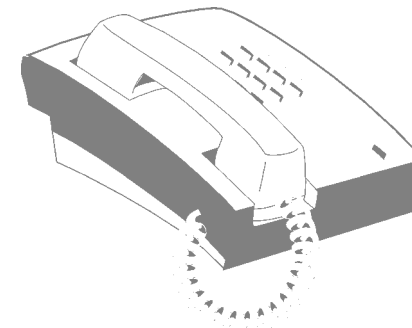
You can learn about your land from county records. Get a copy of the deed and a copy of the map for your property. There are two county offices where you can find this information:

- **Tax Assessor.** Here you can find:
 - Size of your land (number of acres)
 - The listed owner (this person receives the tax bill)
 - Buildings and other "improvements" (houses, barns, etc.)
 - The value of the land (used to calculate your tax bill)
 - Maps of the property
- **Register of Deeds.** Here you can find:
 - The deed and a description of the land, its boundaries and corners, and sometimes a map
 - Any lien or mortgage put on the land because of taxes, loans, or legal problems.



Get legal advice

A lawyer or other professional can be very helpful to a landowner. They can look up all of the information in the county offices for you. A lawyer or accountant can give you advice about taxes. Most lawyers charge fees, but their help may be worth the price. Here are several ways to find a lawyer:



- Call the lawyer referral service of the North Carolina State Bar Association or Legal Aid of North Carolina to ask for the name of a lawyer. (Phone numbers for these organizations are listed in the phone book.)
- Ask friends and neighbors if they can recommend a lawyer.
- Look through the yellow pages in the phone book under "Attorneys."