

**A PRIMER**  
**ON THE TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

(For **all** those who may be considering nominating someone, or being nominated)

Within the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the premier annual award is the Tree Farmer of the Year (TFOY). All participating state committees are urged to select a state winner, who, in our region, may then continue on to compete for the Northeastern States Regional Award. Regional winners then compete for the National Championship. This primer is an attempt to explain and clarify all aspects of the Vermont state, and to a lesser extent, Regional and National process.

**Is the Vermont Award different than the other states?**

Yes! Vermont takes a more “laid-back” approach to the STATE LEVEL PROGRAM. We are not competing one person against another; rather we are showcasing individual’s successful stories, methods, and ideas to promote good forestry practices. No matter how few or many are nominated nobody really loses because all will be evaluated and used to showcase their accomplishments; the uniqueness of every Tree Farm has something to teach us all. With this in mind the STATE PROGRAM does differ significantly from the Regional/ National competitions.

**Whose rules?**

The Vermont State Tree Farm Committee (VTFC) is responsible for the rules governing the state level award. The national organization (ATFS) is responsible for the rules at the regional and national levels.

**Why is the award given?**

The TFOY award is to recognize the PERSON, not the Tree Farm. At the state level the award may be given for outstanding accomplishment in one or more of the following areas:

1. Long term stewardship and practice of sustainable forestry on a Tree Farm
2. Unique technical, educational, organizational, administrative, or political contributions to the VTFC, the Vermont Woodlands Association (VWA), the American Forest Foundation (AFF), or the ATFS.
3. Education of the general public, especially the young, in the principles of sustainable forestry, the working forest, and the core values of the ATFS and VWA, through public seminars, discussions, presentations, classes, articles, field days, talk shows, and other activities.
4. Dedication to the promotion of sustainable forestry, the working forest ethic, and the benefits of Tree Farming in general through various Tree Farm outreach activities such as Tree Farm visits and tours, open houses, and other events held on the Tree Farm

There are no “minimum requirements” in these areas for nominations at the state level. The more the tree farmer has to show the general public the better the chance the farmer will have in being recognized. In general, the Tree Farms of the nominees should not

appear to be “frozen in time” but should be actively managed, especially if being considered for anything above the state level.

While the nominees at the state level may be evaluated in all four areas, competition above the state level will **heavily** favor those with credentials in areas 2, 3 and 4.

### **Who may be nominated for VTOY?**

Nominees for TFOY must have been active, certified (inspected) tree farmers, with a tree farm in Vermont, for at least 5 years (1 successful inspection cycle).

### **Who may nominate a candidate for TFOY?**

Nominations for Vermont TFOY may be made by:

1. The nominee
2. Another active Tree Farmer either within the state, or from a neighboring state (NY, MA, NH)
3. Any professional forester from Vermont or a neighboring state (VT, MA, or NY), including the nominee’s inspector.

### **How are nominations made?**

Nominations must be mailed to the Vermont Tree Farm Committee (VTFC) after the VWA annual meeting (usually early April) but not later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. **See the web site for the mailing address, and points of contact for additional information.** State winners will be announced at the Vermont Woodlands Association annual meeting in the spring of the next year, and will carry the TFOY title for that year (not the year in which nominated).

The state nomination package must include the **nomination form on this web site**, a copy of the Tree Farm management plan (and map), and any supporting documentation the nominator feels adds credibility to the nomination. Please note a FORESTER must sign the nomination form, even if a forester is not the original nominator. To assure package credibility, if the nomination is made by anyone other than a forester, that individual must also sign the nomination form.

By signing the form the FORESTER also implicitly acknowledges his or her willingness to assist in showcasing the tree farm to the general public through a tour, open house, or other event on the Tree Farm.

### **How do nominees progress beyond the state nomination to the regional and national?**

Nominees will NOT be considered by the VTFC for submission to the Regional/ National award levels unless the following additional minimum standards are met:

1. All the requirements at the state level, and
2. A willingness on the part of the forester and Tree Farmer to complete the additional regional and national application forms

3. At least 2 letters of recommendation accompany the nomination package. Letters may be from public agencies, other Tree Farmers, the general public, or foresters not associated with the direct management of the Tree Farm of the nominee, and
4. Evidence of at least 5 activities involving the public on the Tree Farm within the last 5 years, or
5. Evidence of at least 5 activities involving the education of the general public in some Tree Farm or forestry related topic within the last 5 years, or a combination of 4 and 5 totaling 5 activities
6. Evidence of regular harvests and/or physical management activities on the Tree Farm at least two of which occurred within the past year

Because the regional and national awards are based on accomplishments in areas that potentially differ from the state award, all nominees at the state level will be considered for the higher levels regardless of their status (winner or runners-up) after the state level competition, if they meet the above 6 criteria.

### **How often may a Tree Farmer be nominated?**

At the state level a Tree Farmer may be nominated every year, until he/she wins. (Yes, new forms must be filled out every year, signed, and dated. You can't just resubmit the old forms.) A state winner must wait 5 years before being renominated. Above the state level, a state level winner may be nominated every year (assuming the package meets the standards outlined earlier) until he/she wins, OR a new state nominee emerges with better credentials.

### **How is the state competition judged?**

The VTFC will appoint an inspection team from the membership of the Committee (not less than 2 people; neither may have a conflict of interest with any of the nominees) to review the submitted packages and supporting documentation, and conduct an inspection of the Tree Farms. This work will be conducted between 30 September and 30 November. Written recommendations will be forwarded to the Committee. The VTFC will select the state TFOY and the runners-up from those recommendations by 31 January of the next year.