

Nomination of a Tree to the Florida Champion Tree Record

General Information: The Florida Champion Tree program is patterned after the American Forests *National Register of Big Trees* (National Champion Trees) program. Certain species growing in this state may not be eligible for national champion status, but can be recognized as Florida Champions. All reigning National Champion Trees in Florida also hold the title of Florida Champion Tree until displaced by larger trees. Additional details about the national program can be obtained from the following website address: <http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/>.

Eligibility: Nomination of a Florida Champion Tree is open to all species of trees that grow in Florida, whether native or naturalized. Palm trees are included. Species listed as invasive exotics by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council are not eligible for nomination.

Trees nominated for champion status must meet the following criteria:

1. Have an erect, woody main trunk that measures more than 9.5 inches in circumference at 4 ½ feet above the average ground level (see Measurements section below for exceptions.).
2. Be more than 13 feet high, as measured vertically for a point level with the base of the trunk to the highest twig.
3. Have a definite crown of branches or fronds.

Procedure: Anyone may nominate a tree for champion status, with permission from the property owner. Species identification and measurements must be verified by Florida Forest Service personnel. To submit new trees for consideration to the Florida Champion Tree Record, complete all information on the Florida Champion Tree nomination form or nomination web page. Once the property owner and an FFS representative have approved the nomination, it can be submitted to the Urban Forestry Coordinator of the Florida Forest Service, along with a digital photograph.

Measurements: Measurements are to be recorded to the nearest whole unit, rounding upwards from 0.5. The following measurements are required:

1. Circumference of the trunk in inches, 4 ½ feet above the average ground level. This also applies to trees with exceptional swelling at the base, such as baldcypress. If the tree forks below 4.5 feet, the circumference should be taken at the narrowest point below 4 ½ feet where knots, burls, or limbs do not interfere.
2. Height in feet. This is the vertical distance from the highest point of the tree to a point at the same elevation as the stump.
3. Crown Spread diameter in feet. Measure the diameter at the maximum length, and at a 90 degree angle to the maximum. The average of these two measurements determines the Average Crown Spread.

Consult the *American Forests* website above for additional guidance on how to take measurements in exceptional situations.

Calculating Points: The tree with the largest point total will be recorded as the Florida or National Champion of its species.

Required measurements are scored as follows:

1. Circumference – 1 point per inch.
2. Height – 1 point per foot.
3. Average Crown Spread – 1 point per 4 feet.

Each measure is recorded to the nearest whole point, rounding up from 0.5 before calculating the total.

When the total points of two trees are within **two percent** of one another, each tree will be declared a co-champion.

Photograph: A digital photograph should be submitted with each nomination. Because these photographs may be used for publication, please try to achieve the following:

1. Good scenic contrast. The tree and any persons need to be very clearly depicted for printing processes.
2. Capture as much of the tree as possible, emphasizing notable or unusual features. Also, show some sense of scale and proportion.
3. List the names of any persons included in each photograph from left to right.
4. Avoid scenic distractions such as power/telephone wires, trash on ground, vehicles, etc.

Recording GPS Coordinates: This is done to record each tree's location in the most precise manner so that it can be located again at a future date. Specific locations of privately owned trees will remain confidential, unless the property owner allows (in writing) the information to be made public. Record coordinates on paper only in **decimal degrees format (to six decimal digits)**. A positive number indicates North latitude and a negative number indicates West longitude. Also, please submit a copy of the GPS shape file for the tree that is downloaded from the GPS receiver. These files will be used to make maps of publicly owned trees in the future.