



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...AUGUST 23, 2018

PALMETTO BERRY HARVEST GARNERS ATTENTION

Legal harvesting of saw palmetto berries is scheduled to begin shortly at the Dixon Memorial State Forest in Ware County near Waycross. A contractor has been hired to collect berries on the 35,000 acre site, where theft has been a problem in recent years.

"Thieves have hit this forest hard," said Brian Clavier, Chief of Law Enforcement at the Georgia Forestry Commission. "The consequences of illegal harvesting are serious. If caught, perpetrators face theft by taking charges, which can carry penalties including jail time of a year or more, and fines of over a thousand dollars."

Saw palmetto berries have been linked to specific health benefits, and their sale on the illegal market in Georgia and Florida has been increasing. Clavier said the berries appear in August and last until mid-October. Last year's lean crop in Florida and bumper crop in Georgia attracted unwelcome thieves to the state forest, resulting in several arrests.

"Private landowners may face this problem as well," said Clavier. "Landowners can report trespassing or suspicious activity to their local law enforcement."

For more information about forest law enforcement and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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