

GEORGIA FORESTRY  
COMMISSION



## Timber Management- Prescribed Fire

**Burning and Fuel Types:** A prescribed burn is a fire that is deliberately set for specific purposes by trained practitioners. It is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risks. Fire is beneficial for removing unwanted vegetation, reducing hazardous fuels, disposing of logging debris, improving wildlife habitat and native vegetation, and preparing sites for planting.

Fire needs three components to burn: heat, oxygen and fuel. The most common types of fuel found throughout Georgia are organic matter like grasses, pine straw, and leaf litter; shrubs and trees; and logging debris. The more of these fuels and the dryer they are, the more intense the fires can become. The size of the material burning will impact the amount of time it takes to burn. The smaller the material, the quicker it burns. Grass fires will burn much faster than shrubs and logging debris.

GFC offers a certification program throughout the state several times a year for those who practice prescribed burning or are interested in it. Applicants will receive a comprehensive study manual and instruction on subjects such as fire behavior, fire weather and fire tactics. The applicants must pass a written test, have two years of experience and meet a prerequisite of having been the person in charge of five prescribed burns before becoming a certified prescribed burner in Georgia.

If you are new to burning, use a professional and begin a burning regime with burning every second or third year as a means of enhanced wildlife habitat, competition control and aesthetic improvement on your property. Always burn under proper weather conditions, be particularly aware of smoke dispersion. Ensure burns are spatially separated and conducted in alternating years to create a checkered board like pattern of burned and unburned areas throughout your property. This will create habitat diversity by always maintaining at least some native plant communities in the earliest successional stage of development of one-year old or less, which is most preferred and beneficial for wildlife.

Install firebreaks by removing all debris and vegetation to a level of mineral soil whereby a fire cannot burn across the ground. Firebreaks should be approximately 6-feet wide or wider to provide reasonable control of fires.

Obtain a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) the day of and prior to burning by calling your county Forestry Office. GFC can provide burning assistance upon your request and acceptance of service agreements.

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More information on prescribed burning can be found on our website below.

<https://gatrees.org/fire-prevention-suppression/prescribed-burn/>