TreeLines

August 2023 – 2nd Edition

Top 8 Questions to Ask Before Buying Seedlings

Knowing pine seedling buying options, where to get information, and what's suitable for your land is key to getting successful results. As you are gathering information to decide what to plant on your land, here are some important questions to ask as you weigh your options.

#1: How do I make sure I can take advantage of whatever timber market there is at harvest?

Years ago, the choices for tree seedling genetics were limited, reducing the opportunity for landowners to take advantage of the highest dollar value markets available at harvest.

Decades of improvements in genetics and silviculture have offered increased timber yields and log quality, diversifying the markets in which the timber can be sold.

Expansion of wood use such as cross-laminated timber (CLT) for residential and commercial buildings, as well as the construction of pellet mills, offer new opportunities for landowners. Now you can set yourself up to be ready for any timber market by planting advanced genetics providing:

- Earlier thinning
- More high-value sawtimber per acre
- Faster growth
- Better disease resistance; and
- Improved log quality

for an even more profitable forest for you and your family. Simply put, better genetics give you more options at harvest:

- Pulp market prices higher? You're covered!
- Sawtimber better? You are ready for that too.

What you choose to plant will greatly affect your revenue at harvest. Choose wisely!

#2: How do I determine the best genetics to plant to meet my financial goals?

How do you choose when there are so many choices and from so many providers?

Make sure the person you work with has the experience and education in forestry to understand all of the factors you need to consider when planting. This expertise should include silviculture and genetics.

Additionally, they should be willing and able to give you the hard, precise data to prove why their recommendations are sound. Ask for PRS data – Performance Rating System sheets. These sheets are generated for most loblolly seedling families.

Landowners should use these sheets to make sure they are planting adapted families of loblolly pine that have appropriate levels of genetic improvements for their area. These sheets can give you performance ratings of specific families. You can then compare that data with the data of the seedlings you are considering.

That's where speaking to a trained forestry professional is essential.

Ask your reforestation advisor about their background and what other landowners have accomplished with their advice.

Ask for references from other landowners.

Make sure they show you the options and data to make the right choice for your goals.

#3: Should I plant bareroot or containerized seedlings?

The answer is YES, and MAYBE.

For most reforestation situations, bareroot seedlings will provide survival rates of around 88%. Planting with container seedlings can improve survival on droughty sites and may be planted early in the planting season or late in the season planting to improve survival.

However, under typical conditions during the standard planting window (December to March), bareroot seedlings will survive and grow equally well to container seedlings.

Planting containerized seedlings is not a substitute for proper quality site preparation or poor genetics. Landowners should not use containerized seedlings to skimp on-site preparation, thinking that containerized seedlings will compensate for poor or no site prep.

For example, failing to bed on a wet site and planting containerized seedlings will likely not give as good of results as bedding and planting bareroot seedlings in terms of growth and survival because of the limiting factor (excessive soil moisture and poor aeration of the roots) has not been addressed.

As, or more, important with seedling type is the level of genetics chosen because the seedling is just the "package" for whatever kind of genetics, old-school or advanced, that determines the productivity, health and value of a future forest.

And just because it's in a container, doesn't mean the genetics are better. In fact in some cases you may simply be paying more for the container rather than what's inside.

#4: Should I plant Hardwoods or Pine? What will my site selection/property grow?

The answer to that is, well, it depends.

It depends on what type of site you have and what your objectives are.

Pine, specifically Loblolly Pine, will grow across a wide variety of sites. Although the Loblolly Pine originated in lower areas, it also will grow on hillsides. When you plant Loblolly Pine, you will have a shorter rotation than you would have with general hardwoods. In most circumstances, Loblolly Pine will be be ready to thin around the age of 10 to 15 years.

Hardwoods are often planted for objectives that are different than pine, including wildlife, wetlands mitigation and other conservation goals. For objectives focused on forest products, hardwoods are more site specific.

There are bottomland hardwoods, such as Swamp Chestnut Oak, and upland hardwoods, such as the common White Oak. They're not going to grow in all the sites that Loblolly Pine will grow.

Hardwoods may not be ready to thin until about 20 to 25 years, depending on the site and the growth rate. Although hardwoods have a longer rotation, the products produced from them are valuable in their own right and lend themselves well to certain markets and regions.

If you match the site to the species and follow correct silvicultural methods, you can and will have a productive forest that will yield a good revenue for you in the future. No matter what species you choose, always use high-quality seedlings.

#5: What kind of customer support should I expect regarding my seedlings, before, during and after my reforestation?

Make sure the reforestation company you work with asks you about your goals for you and your family and helps you to achieve those.

They should communicate with you in a clear, transparent way with facts and data that support their claims, especially around genetics and field performance.

Ask about their quality control and tracking systems to make sure they are delivering you the high-quality seedlings you ordered.

They should be able to deliver what you want, where you want it, and when you want it.

Your reforestation partner should commit to being there for advice and support from planning through planting. You are in this for the long haul – they should be too.

#6: How do I know which type of seedlings is best for my land?

When the reforestation process starts, most landowners know the amount of land they own and want to plant the most productive seedlings available. With new options and genetics available today, site preparation and seedling selection are two key factors where it pays to talk to a Reforestation Advisor (RA) to ensure you are getting the most value for your investment.

When talking to landowners, the first question RAs always ask is, "What is your goal in harvesting your trees?" At that point, we begin to ask a landowner about the site they want to plant. Some basic questions that have to be addressed immediately, such as:

- What is the soil type in the planting site – Sand, Silt, or Clay?
- What is the soil pH?
- What nutrients do you have in the soil?

After investing money and time in site preparation, landowners must do their homework to determine the best seedlings for their goals. Let's look at pine seedlings.

As breeding and technology have advanced, landowners continuously have new options available to them.

Following rigorous progeny testing, Open Pollinated, Mass Control Pollinated (MCP®), and Varietal seedlings are now available to the public. In addition, landowners have classifications within each of those types.

The rankings with the classifications are influenced by the following:

- Height
- Volume
- Straightness concerning form
- Disease resistance
- Forking probability

ArborGen can provide customers with precise performance data of all traits supported by university co-ops and internal trial data.

By asking the right questions, we can use our knowledge of forestry and genetics to partner with a landowner to help establish a stand of trees with the highest probability of reaching their goals.

#7: When should I choose Elite seedlings over others?

The advancement of forest genetics within the last twenty years has steadily improved with more options than ever. The agriculture industry has always known the value of a hybrid.

For instance, as corn prices stay the same or even drop, the way a farmer can increase his revenue is to increase the yield on the same amount of land.

Forestry is now catching up to that idea. The value of a hybrid seedling is based on the specific parents used to produce the hybrid seed. **Mass Control Pollinated seedlings** (MCP®) are specifically bred to increase the yield over **Open-Pollinated** (OP) seedlings.

The same amount of land increased yield. With just a small increase in the initial investment into MCP seedlings over OP, the return on investment increases significantly. Would you consider that a good

investment if you could invest $100 today and earn $1,600?

ArborGen has four categories of its Mass Control Pollinated (MCP®) hybrids separated by increasingly higher levels of volume growth while maintaining the same high standards for log quality depending on the seedling's parents.

As with our Open-Pollinated (OP) seedlings, we have MCP Advanced, Select, and Elite. And don't be misled. MCP is not another seedling vendor's CMP. There is a difference. Make sure you ask to see data to make sure you are comparing apples to apples.

To help you understand the increased return for each dollar of additional investment in improved genetics, ArborGen has developed a tool based on industry models and cashflow analysis to help you see the value of the investment in your selection.

Our seedling calculator demonstrates scenarios in which each increase in your seedling investment yields an increase in revenue.

Contact a Reforestation Advisor to see the calculator and customize it to your selections.

#8: When is Elite not Elite?

Without a doubt, it's pollen season. And if there can be a "good" pollen season, this sure has been one.

Chances are you have reached for a Kleenex or two these last few weeks. But have you? Or was it a Puffs?

See, Kleenex is a brand name, but over time has become the name we call a tissue. And all tissue is the same, right? The folks that make Puffs probably disagree – strongly.

The same can be said for a brand name used by seedling providers. ArborGen's Open-Pollinated Elite (OP Elite) has the same name as other providers' elite: same name, VERY different seedling. And you could be paying more for lower genetic quality.

Here's why.

Over the past decade, the language for describing tree performance has evolved from the less useful "generation" terminology to category designations such as Advanced, Select, and Elite, which are based entirely on performance.

However, for these designations to be helpful, you must understand what each term means, which can vary from company to company.

By not understanding the different criteria companies use for determining the level of genetics, you risk paying too much for your seedlings and not getting the performance you expect.

ArborGen	other providers
ELITE (Top 3%) ✓	⊘
SELECT (Top 4% -10%)	"elite" (7-56)
ADVANCED (Top 11% -25%)	"select"
⊘	"advanced"

Some companies market the industry stand-by 7-56 as Elite. ArborGen sells the same seedling as Select, our "middle grade" (Advanced, Select, Elite), because we use more stringent criteria for categorizing our seedlings.

Within ArborGen, Elite is considered the best among OP families or the top 3 percent in an index combining growth and the quality traits such as fusiform rust resstance, stem straightness, and forking reduction.

A tissue by Kleenex is not necessarily the same quality tissue as Puffs. Their OP Elite is not our OP Elite. Make sure you compare apples to apples when comparing one provider's seedlings with another.

Ask for the data to ensure you get what you think you are paying for. Ask your Reforestation Advisor to explain the difference between ours and theirs.

Download these Top 8 Questions to Ask BEFORE You Buy Seedlings (from anyone)

First Name*

Email*

Please send me the Treelines E-News (bi-monthly)

- (•) Yes
- ( ) No

Send

PLEASE NOTE: We value your privacy and will never share your email address or send you SPAM or sales-y marketing emails. You can always opt-out at any time.

Save the Date...

Making Sense of Reforestation: Your Questions Answered LIVE

Join our team of seasoned Reforestation Advisors in this 1 hour open Q&A session.

- Ask our Reforestation Advisors anything about reforestation
- Get region-specific details from certified Foresters & experts
- Eliminate confusion & feel confident about your decisions

We're excited to see you there!

Register Here

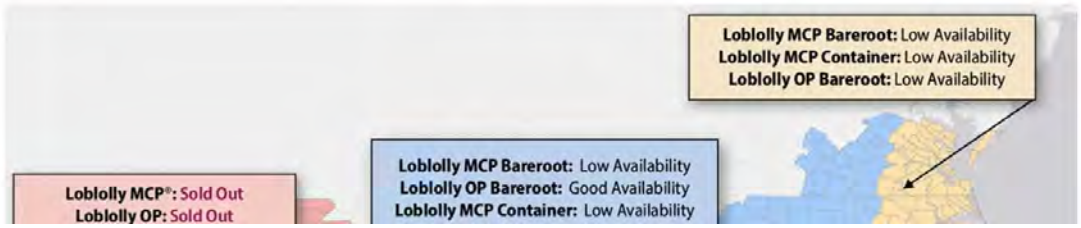
Client Results

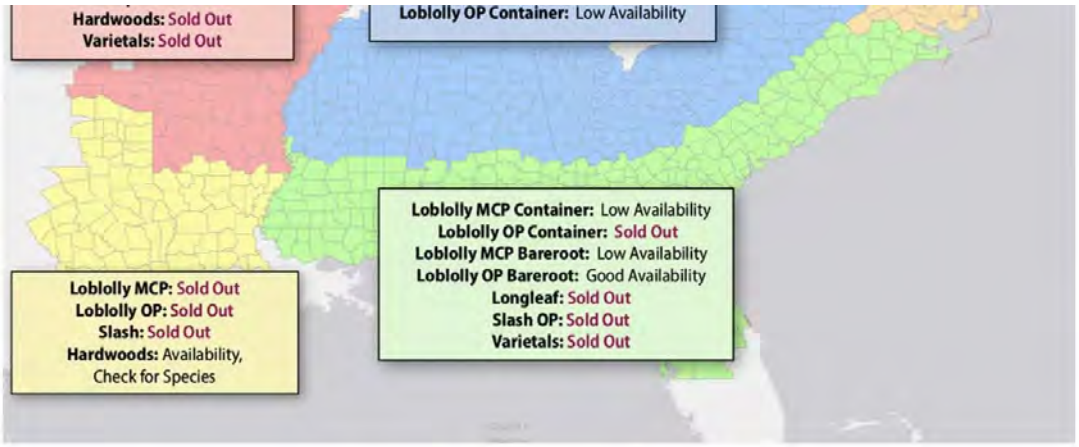
1.5-year-old MCP® Select
Nevada County, AR

10.5' MCP® @ 3rd Growing Season
Slaughter, LA

See More Client Results

Seedling Availability





Reserve Your Seedlings

Click here for the previous edition of TreeLines.

Need a trusted partner to guide the way? Get in touch with a Reforestation Advisor to explore your options!

Paul Jeffreys, Ph.D.
Western Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi
205-712-9582
See More

Austin Heine
North Carolina and Virginia
910-660-3209
See More

Shannon Stewart
Eastern Texas, Southern Louisiana
936-239-6189
See More

Kylie Burdette
South Carolina
864-650-4454
See More

Jason Cromer
Florida Gulf Coast, South Alabama, Georgia
229-310-0648
See More

Greg Hay
Arkansas, Northern Louisiana, and Oklahoma
501-350-4217
See More

Jason Watson
Director, U.S. Sales
404-840-7489
See More

FIND AN ADVISOR OR NURSERY

GET IN TOUCH

2011 Broadbank Court
Ridgeville, S.C. 29472

888.888.7158

info@arborgen.com

QUICK LINKS

- Find a Reforestation Advisor
- ArborGen TreeLines - News & Updates
- Join Our Team
- Helpful Resources
- About ArborGen
- In the News

- Blenheim, SC Nursery
- Taylor, SC Nursery
- Bellville, GA Nursery
- Shellman, GA Nursery
- Selma, AL Nursery
- Bluff City, AR Nursery
- Bullard, TX Nursery
- Livingston, TX Distribution Point
- Jasper, TX Nursery

Request Catalog

- Press Releases
- Search Website

Get Treelines