

2023 Lewis County Tree Farmers of the Year Offering Tour of Their Farm on June 20

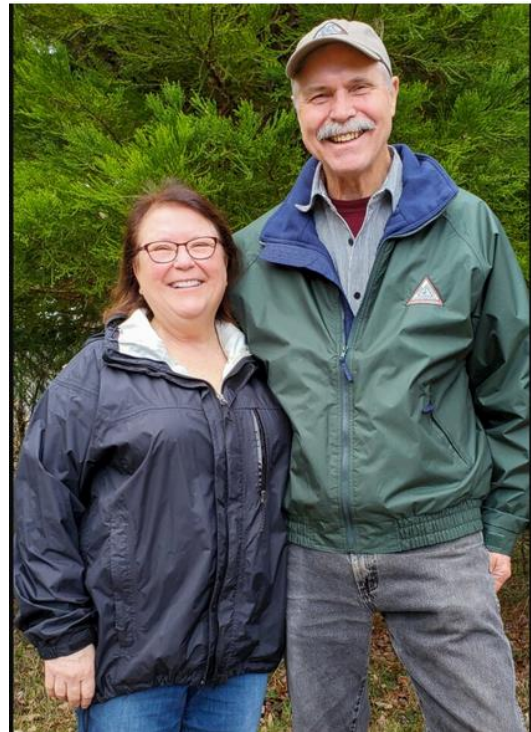
By Owen Sexton
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The Lewis County Farm Forestry Association (LCFFA) named Morris “Merc” and Nina Boyer as its 2023 Tree Farmers of the Year. The couple will be hosting the LCFFA’s June 2023 Twilight Tour on June 20, according to a news release.

Beginning at 5:30 p.m., tour attendees will be taken around a half-mile walking loop on the Boyer Family Tree Farm in Randle with the Boyers giving talks at four various points explaining challenges they overcame in order to be named the 2023 Tree Farmers of the Year.

Additionally, Washington State Department of Natural Resources Service Forester Mackenna Milosevich will be on hand to answer questions.

Boyer Family Tree Farm is located in Randle at 418 Kiona Road. The tour is free and registration is not required, but RSVPs are appreciated. To RSVP, email mercboyer@gmail.com.



Nina and Morris "Merc" Boyer are pictured in this courtesy photo. The Boyers have been named the Lewis County Farm Forestry Association's 2023 Tree Farmers of the Year.

Coming from Grays Harbor County where the family has lived for six generations, the Boyers originally purchased the farm in 2014 as it was contiguous to land owned by their daughter and son-in-law’s tree farm, but the 20-acre parcel had fallen out of the county assessor’s designated forestland (DFL) classification due lack of sufficient trees according to the release.

Morris “Merc” Boyer spoke to The Chronicle over the phone to explain how the farm fell out of DFL classification and some of the challenges he and his wife faced while trying to revitalize the farm.

“It was logged in 2006, I think, and did not get replanted and didn’t get a new crop growing well,” Boyer said. “It sat for eight years and didn’t have enough trees to continue to be qualified as designated forestland. Lewis County can determine that using Google Earth.”

To complicate things, some of the trees growing had root rot, the soil is pumice-based and doesn't hold water well, and noxious weeds had grown out of control throughout the property, among many other issues.

“We were fighting eight years of competing vegetation and brush buildup, which was dominated by Scotch broom. Right now, you drive along Highway 12, almost any county road, and it's out in force in bright yellow. It's a scourge, and it's hard to kill and keep it dead. Nine years later and we're still fighting the scotch broom,” said Boyer.

Initially, the Boyers tried planting Douglas fir and some cedar trees as those trees were growing on neighboring farms. But, due to summer droughts, the majority of the trees they planted died. Since then, they tried several other tree species, including some specifically cloned to be drought resistant, but even those couldn't survive with summer droughts growing longer and hotter in Washington.

“Then my son-in-law said, ‘I think you need to try western white pine. It's drought resistant and can grow in this soil, and is resistant to root rot too,’” Boyer said.

The first crop of western white pine trees they planted at an 80% to 90% survival rate, according to Boyer, and many of those trees are now six to seven years old.

“We've been working on it for nine years and now we've gotten it to the point where we got it certified, just last month, by the American Tree Farms System as a certified tree farm that is being managed for high standards of forest health beyond just growing wood by providing clean water and enhanced wildlife habitat,” said Boyer.

Other topics to be discussed on the tour include pre-commercial tree thinning and pruning, wildlife management, supplemental forest products, strategies for fighting Scotch broom and other competing vegetation, combating laminated root rot, silviculture in pumice soil, dealing with land depressions and frost pockets and, finally, government assistance programs utilized.

For more information, call Boyer at 360-480-4282.