



UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Special Forest Products

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Many Idaho forest owners are becoming more aware of income available from growing and marketing wood products. Landowners are less aware of the income potential for non-timber forestland commodities collectively referred to as *Special Forest Products*. Special forest products can help forest landowners generate income between timber harvests. Items with commercial potential which can be (and in some cases have been) harvested in Idaho include:

- Floral greens (used fresh or dried for floral arrangements and "Potpourri" mixtures): Oregon grape, beargrass, pachistima ("Oregon boxwood"), red-osier dogwood, mosses, pearly everlasting, teasel, baby's breath.
- Christmas ornamentals: cones and evergreen boughs.
- Wild edible mushrooms: morels, boletes, chanterells.
- Other edibles and medicinals: berries for candy, pies, ice-creams, jellies, syrups, etc.; bark, roots, and other plant parts used for natural medicines, flavorings, etc.
- Pacific Yew: Used to synthesize taxol, a compound with great promise as a cancer fighting drug.

Managing forest for special forest products?

Most forestry research in the United States has focused on growing wood products. There has been little research done on how to grow understory plants or mushrooms, so this area is ripe for experimentation. For example, some floral greens achieve the highest quality under partial shade. There is also some evidence that commercially valuable shrub species improve with nitrogen fertilization. Additional research is needed on the sustainability of various special forest product harvesting methods. For the most part, special

forest products will be managed jointly with timber. Special forest products may actually provide a vehicle for timber stand improvement. For example, fertilizing brush may boost timber production. Pruning white pine for Christmas boughs reduces blister rust risk and increases log quality.

Getting Started. Starting in any new enterprise can be taxing, both financially and personally. Therefore it is necessary to do some investigating, planning and budgeting before investing time and energy managing or harvesting special forest products. Understanding markets is critical. Formal markets for special forest products are often more limited than those for more traditional forest products, such as sawlogs or pulp. Special forest products entrepreneurs must intimately understand *who's* buying, *what* they are buying, and *when* they are buying. There are a number of educational opportunities for people who want to become more informed special forest products entrepreneurs:

Extension Publications. There are a variety of publications available through the Cooperative Extension System to supplement your knowledge of this area:

- *Special Forest Products*. UI, CIS 520. \$0.50
- *Special Forest Products Buyers/Processors in the Pacific Northwest and coastal British Columbia*. WSU, EB 1580. 1992. \$1.00.
- *Special forest products: A guide to floral greens*. 1990 WSU, EB 1059 12 pp. \$2.00

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