

In the Nature Preserve

SWEETGUM STAND

Text and photos by Maggie Heineman

Sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua) is second in production only to oaks among hardwoods. The wood is used as flooring, furniture, veneers, home interiors, and other lumber applications. The wood is also used as paper pulp and to make baskets. Pioneers once peeled the bark and scraped the resin-like solid to produce chewing gum. Sweetgum is a favorite landscape tree because of its beautiful glossy leaves and brilliant fall color, and because it makes a good shade tree. Sweetgum is easily recognized by its star-shaped leaves and its woody, spiny, ball-like fruit.

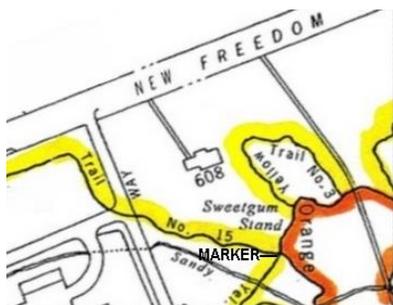
(sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/sweetgum/sweetgum.htm)

The marker at the intersection of the Orange Trail with Yellow Trails 15 and 2 explains that until 1970 there was a farm field there. After Medford



Leas bought the property, nature took its course. Sweetgum, like Virginia Pine, is a pioneer species which moves into abandoned fields because it thrives in sunlight. Eventually pioneer species

give way to trees such as oak, maple, beech and hickory, which grow up in their shade to form a climax forest.



The house which is 608 on the map (**Brian and Isabel Daly** lived there, and later **Rona Keilen**) is #12 New Freedom Road. Maybe sweet-

gums planted behind that house provided seeds for the trees in the Sweetgum Stand.

Without human intervention The Meadow would become a sweetgum stand. In October there

were about two dozen 10-20 foot tall sweetgums in the meadow beyond the houses at the end of Bridlington Way North. Along with the tall sweetgums growing among the cedars, there were hundreds of small sweetgums on both sides of the Red Trail that passes through that area.

In November **Dave Barclay** and **Gordon Brummer** began removing sweetgums in the meadow near their homes. Dave uses a chainsaw on the large trees. Gordon uses loppers for the smaller ones. Their work is proceeding rapidly and may be complete by December 1.



Two sweetgums tower over both the house at #12 New Freedom Road and the evergreens planted alongside them. Younger trees in the Sweetgum Stand can be seen behind them.



One of four sweetgums along Wilkins Station Road. Some of the trees that invaded the meadow were nearly as tall as those along the road, but much smaller in diameter than the older tree