



Wendy Burton, founder of World Tree Technologies, hugs an 11-year-old tree. In photo at right, she shows off a typical giant leaf on a young Empress Splendor tree.

Money Does Grow On Trees: A New Cash Crop

We've all heard about the slow process of growing trees as a cash crop, but Empress Splendor™ hardwood trees give the fastest and greatest returns.

According to Wendy Burton, Founder and CEO of World Tree Technologies, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, Empress Splendor trees grow to timber size in as little as 7 years. They grow 10 to 20 ft. the first year. The wood is strong, lightweight and prized by musical instrument makers, cabinet makers and used for windows, doors, spindles, crown molding and trim. The wood resists insects and won't absorb moisture or rot. What's more, it regenerates from the stump after each harvest up to 7 times.

Why is the Empress Splendor getting so much attention, and why should we plant these trees?

"Our parents and grandparents planted trees to enhance the beauty of their homes or to provide a windbreak for other crops," says Burton. "But today this is no longer the only reason. New fast-growing species now make it viable to plant trees as cash crops. The Empress Splendor is the best example of the new trees. It's the fastest growing hardwood tree in the world."

Who are the people planting this tree?

Empress Splendor trees are getting a lot of attention these days from ranchers, crop farmers, dairy farmers, hobby farmers, retired farmers and ranchers, and many other individuals who have started to delve into the world of hardwood tree cash cropping. Some of the reasons given are to use land with poor soil quality that isn't good for

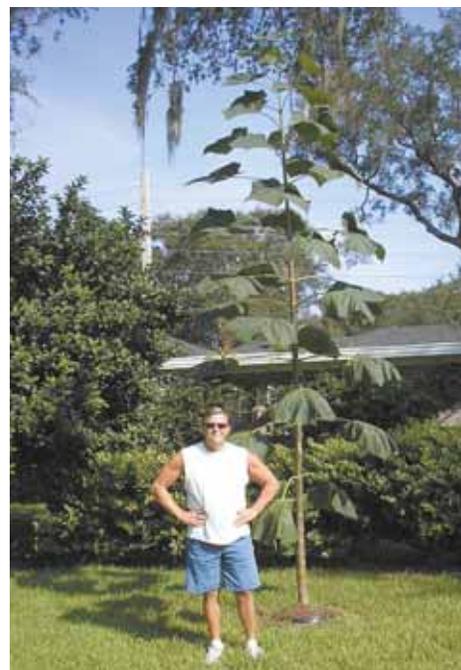
other crops. Because of the high nutrient factor of the giant Empress Splendor leaves, when they break down they actually help replenish the soil. The trees themselves thrive in the worst soil possible: clay sandy loam, making this an ideal crop for underused land. Another reason given for getting into trees is to diversify crops to offset commodity fluctuations.

Are fast-growing hardwood plantations really an option in the U.S.?

Burton doesn't hesitate when she says, "Yes, without a doubt". The market for Empress Splendor trees is small but growing as more trees are planted. As the supply grows, the market for the wood will grow as well. Most of the largest plantations are in the Southeast U.S., close to large timber processing facilities. But Burton is adamant that small tree farms are still a viable option with many farmers opting to purchase or rent mobile log processing units to harvest their timber, which can then be open air dried without the use of a costly kiln. A new "sustainability" trend that is sweeping the country consists of local farmers producing hardwoods for local manufacturers.

Other farmers work with the wood during the winter months when crops are dormant. They're manufacturing products with the wood they grow, selling it on eBay, or exporting it to Japan where it is prized for its quality. Crop commodities fluctuate wildly from year to year - and you have no choice about when to harvest them - but if you grow trees, you can let them grow if prices are down and harvest when prices go up. It gives you more control of this farm asset.

According to Burton, by planting 300 trees per acre on a 12 by 12-ft. grid, you can produce a minimum of 30,000 board feet of lumber after only 7 years at an average price of \$3 to \$7 a board foot. Because Empress Splendor trees regenerate from the stump up to 7 times after each harvest, you only need to replant fields every 50 years. If a farmer harvests the timber himself and mills it with his own equipment, the profit margin can be maximized. The work can be done during winter months when they can't be in the fields.



"I planted this tree in mid-May 2009 and it has grown 16 ft. in 4 1/2 months. I originally heard about Empress Splendor Trees through FARM SHOW," says a customer in Neptune, Fla.