

How Can You Help the Cross Timbers?

Think about the values provided by Cross Timbers. Once a forest is removed, it will take more than a lifetime to replace.

Blend Cross Timbers conservation into your land-use plans and strive to retain, maintain, and protect where possible. Learn how to minimize the negative impacts from roads, grading, soil movement, and drainage.

Manage your woodland intentionally to improve and restore forest health and resiliency:

Cross Timbers forests are fire-adapted; prescribed burning is an important management tool, where feasible, and if applied carefully.

Monitor and take action on insect and disease outbreaks, particularly during times of drought or tree stress.

Thin crowded stands to improve tree health and encourage oak regeneration, favoring post oak.

Learn to identify and control invasive species.

Avoid changing the slope of your soil and disturbing mature tree roots.

If in doubt, ask a professional for advice.

Find help at:

www.forestry.ok.gov/contact-us



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Cross Timbers Gateway From Forest to Prairie

The woodlands of central Oklahoma are the transition from our eastern forests to the western prairies. These woodlands, known as the Cross Timbers, are a mosaic of thick forest, open woodland, and prairie patches. Of Oklahoma's 12.7 million acres of forest land, about 4 million acres are in the Cross Timbers.

Take pride in our natural diversity – Oklahoma has one of the largest areas of ancient Cross Timbers.

What Makes Up the Cross Timbers?

A complex mosaic of upland deciduous forest, savanna, and prairie, the Cross Timbers spreads across central Oklahoma north into Kansas and south into Texas. Post oak, blackjack oak, and black hickory dominate the Cross Timbers, with blackjack becoming more common in the west – making a healthy Cross Timbers stand look different in eastern Oklahoma as compared to central and western portions of the state. Beneath and between trees, a diversity of other plants flourish. Understory trees, such as roughleaf dogwood and redbud, bloom beneath the canopy. Low shrubby plants like buckbrush and fragrant sumac provide

habitat and food for small wildlife species. A variety of grasses and wildflowers that are typical of the prairie will thrive in the sunny gaps between trees. Indian grass, big bluestem, coneflowers, and Indian blanket shoot up where sunlight is abundant.

Because this forest type holds limited commercial value for timber production, it has not experienced large-scale industrial logging. Sizable tracts of old growth post oak and blackjack oak forests are still found in many parts of Oklahoma with trees as old as 400 years. In spite of their age, the trees average only 15 to 40 feet tall and 5 to 20 inches in diameter.