Alumna named 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year

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Freeman School alumna Hanna Gamble (BSM '12) was named Louisiana's 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year by the Louisiana Forestry Association. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

After graduating from the Freeman School in 2012, Hanna Gamble (BSM '12) almost immediately took over full-time management of Jack R. Gamble Jr. LLC, her family-

owned company that manages St. Lucia Plantation, a pine-tree farm in Logansport, Louisiana.

She was already a company employee and interested in a forestry career, even though Tulane did not have a forestry program. But her education served her well, she says.

Within five years, the third-generation landowner would be recognized as Louisiana's 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year by the Louisiana Forestry Association.

"It's such an honor," Gamble said. "I love the forestry industry. I love pine trees—they're a renewable resource," noting that her late father, for whom the company is named and who originally planted the trees, would have enjoyed having more interaction with the farm, but for his workload as an attorney.

St. Lucia Plantation contains more than 1,800 acres of mostly loblolly pine, which Gamble sells to be milled into packaging, toilet paper, plywood and other products.

The trees are grown within the guidelines of the American Tree Farm System and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which promote responsible forestry.

"Technology and planting practices change throughout the years, and pine-tree farming is a long-term type of farming. We have a lot of different stands that have different techniques that were utilized," though the goal is always to grow a dense, tall, hardy tree.

Gamble already seems to be a forestry star, having attracted the attention of some Baton Rouge–area urban-forestry students, who were eager to have a woman as a professional role model.

"Some women said that I had inspired them. I'm thrilled to hear that I'm inspiring the next generation even though I guess I'm still considered part of the 'next' generation."

Her work honors previous generations as well. "I come from a long line of farming, and to my knowledge, my ancestors homesteaded in Logansport. So it was out of necessity that you treat the land with respect, and it provides."

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