

The What, The Why, and the How of Hiring a Forester

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If you are one of the over 100,000 people who own a piece of New Hampshire's forest, you are a steward of our clean water, beautiful scenery, abundant wildlife, fresh air, natural and cultural heritage—not to mention the basis of our forest industry and much of our recreation.

Owning land gives many rewards and, as with most precious things, the more you pay attention and care for your land, the greater those rewards. Wendy Scribner, forester in Carroll County with UNH Cooperative Extension encourages owners to know their land. "It's important to think about what you really want from your land. You can grow firewood and timber, create a haven for wildlife, cut trails, and so many other things."



Photo by Frank Mitchell

UNH Cooperative Extension foresters can get you started caring for your land. "I can walk the land with landowners and help them know what they can get out of the land," says Scribner. There is a UNH Cooperative Extension forester who provides assistance and advice to landowners in each county. If you don't know your local county extension forester, a call to the Forestry Information Center at 1-800-444-8978 will connect you.

In addition to these forestry educators, there are over 200 foresters offering a range of services to landowners, including forest stewardship planning, current use assistance, inventory and appraisal, buying and selling standing trees (timber and firewood), tending and nurturing young trees (weeding and thinning), cutting for regenerating the next forest, wildlife habitat management, and trails and other recreation improvements. In New Hampshire, all foresters offering services to private landowners for compensation are licensed.

UNH Cooperative Extension maintains an online and searchable [directory of licensed foresters offering services to landowners](#); however, no list compensates for an informed consumer.

You can take some simple steps to make sure you hire the forester who is right for you. Your ability to articulate your goals and the forester's ability to listen, understand, and interpret those goals into appropriate actions is key to satisfactory results.

The following steps will help you collect enough information to make an informed decision about who to hire.

1. Identify your goals for your land. What do you want to accomplish? Not sure? Fill out a [landowner goal assessment form](#) to help you think it through.
2. Use the [directory of licensed foresters offering services to landowners](#) to develop a list of foresters in your geographic area.
3. Talk with friends and family members with similar goals and get recommendations from them.
4. Use the information collected to identify at least three professionals who might be a good fit.
5. Contact those professionals and gather the information below:
 - a) **Credentials:** education, experience, licensing and certifications, professional affiliations, recent continuing education.

- b) **Professional philosophy:** what are their goals when working with clients; what type of clients do they prefer; why did they get into the profession and what has made him/her stay?
 - c) Describe your **goals**, and ask if they have worked with other clients with similar goals.
 - d) Request one to three **references** who have similar goals or situations, with whom you could talk. Ask to see a management plan they've prepared, or walk you through a property they've managed over time.
 - e) Discuss **fees** charged. If there are no fees, understand who pays the bill and how that might affect their recommendations.
 - f) Discuss their **availability** to do the work and the timeframe to complete it.
6. Contact the references and get a feel for the forester's traits, including:
- a) Reliability and responsiveness
 - b) Communication skills—listening, speaking and writing.
 - c) Quality of work
 - d) Assessment of the forester's associates (loggers, truckers, office staff, and assistants) who will likely work on your project.
 - e)