

# Pine Straw Market

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The North Central Mississippi RC&D Council has received a \$24,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service to develop a "*Pine Straw Market*" in North Mississippi.

Our RC&D Council wants to educate and make forest landowners aware of the excellent opportunity to bale and sell loblolly pine straw to landscapers, nurseries, construction contractors and others as mulch throughout north Mississippi and surrounding areas.

The demand for pine straw as landscape mulch is increasing. However, other states such as Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana are selling and transporting the pine straw mulch to our state. Pine straw can definitely be a profitable business. Pine straw was a \$50 million dollar business in North Carolina in 1996 and a \$25 million dollar industry in Georgia.

## FACTS:

- Pine stands starting at age 8-10 years can produce 100-150 bales of pine straw per acre per year
- Price for pine straw bales range from \$3-\$8 per bale
- Pine straw bales should weigh approximately 15-20 pounds (14"x14"x28" bale size)
- Pine straw uses include: mulch for home and commercial landscapes, pathways, construction sites
- Harvesting pine straw is extremely labor intensive
- Pine trees shed their needles from August-January
- Studies show that 30-40 pounds of nitrogen is lost for 100 bales of straw per acre harvested
- Pine straw conserves moisture, will not wash away and will not attract termites like other wood mulches
- Pine straw is a renewable resource
- Baling pine straw reduces the risk of wild fires in pine stands
- Pine straw is an attractive low cost mulch and easy to spread by homeowners

## DOs:

- Managing for pine-straw baling include:
  1. Controlling weeds. Pine stands must be free of vegetation and understory prior to raking. Shrubs and trees can be controlled with herbicides or mechanical weeding.
  2. Raking. Before raking, the area must be cleared of all twigs, pine cones and limbs. Raking can be done by hand or machine.
  3. Baling. Most common method is done by hand with a box baler. Machine balers can be used.
  4. Fertilizing. Fertilizing pine stands may increase tree growth and pine-straw production. Apply 200 lbs. of diammonium phosphate (18-46-0) per acre or apply 100 lbs. of N, 50 lbs. of P and 50 lbs. of K
  5. Marketing. There are 2 primary methods of selling pine straw: 1) Landowner harvests the straw and sells retail 2) Landowner leases land for baling rights either on a per acre or per bale basis
- Peak time to harvest is October-November. However, the pine straw can be harvested year round
- Pine straw should be harvested every 2-3 years

## DON'Ts:

- DO NOT bale pine straw on pine stands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- DO NOT harvest pine straw every year on pine stands without applying fertilizer
- DO NOT bale wet straw
- DO NOT damage your trees with equipment
- DO NOT give your pine straw away

## WEBSITES:

- Mississippi Pine Straw Webpage : <http://www.pinestraw.biz/>
- East Texas Pine Straw Webpage: <http://texaspinestraw.tamu.edu/index.html>
- AGIQUIP, Rome, GA - Pine Straw Equipment Dealer: <http://www.agriquip.com/>