Written by Julie Jacobs
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Rock Falls, IL - Jerry and Marge Misek were selected as 2011 Illinois' Tree Farmers of the Year. A tour of their Jo Daviess County Tree Farm, Acorn Acres, is being sponsored by the Illinois Tree Farm Program and the Northwest Illinois Forestry Association on Saturday, September 29th.

The tour is open to the public and will start with registration from 9:00 to 9:45 am. There will be a $5.00 registration fee to cover lunch and snacks.

Following registration, small groups will start a walking tour of moderate difficulty through the forest. There will be 8 ten minute stops on the half mile tour. At each stop, speakers will discuss their topic and answer brief questions. Topics covered are: regeneration from the 1998 wind storm damage; tree diseases; pond establishment; commercial thinning of Black Walnut; Bush Honeysuckle eradication; Shiitake mushroom production; selecting crop trees in a pre-commercial Black Walnut thinning; and Black Walnut sale.

Lunch will follow the forestry tour with short presentations, door prizes, and a Woodmizer sawmill demonstration. The afternoon quarter mile walking tour will include 6 stops. The stops will include: CRP warm season grass establishment; CRP shrub plantings; dry dam; grass waterways, diversion and rock checks; wildlife food plot, firebreaks, and alternative warm season grasses; and a shallow water pond.

The event will take place rain or shine, so please dress accordingly. The morning walking tour will last 2 hours and the afternoon tour will last 1 ½ hours. Attendees should have the ability to walk over the trails. Come to the tour and enjoy a walk in a hardwood forest adorned with fall colors, meet some great people, and maybe pick up a useful idea or two.

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The Acorn Acres Tree Farm is located 6 miles southeast of Elizabeth, IL. To reach the tour site from the north, take Route 20 to Derinda Road (2 miles east of Elizabeth), turn south and travel 3 ½ miles to Skene Road. Turn left on Skene Road and travel ½ mile to the farm lane. The address is 3093 East Skene Road.

From the south, take Route 78 north of Mt. Carroll for 2 miles and turn left on Elizabeth Road. Travel approximately 6 miles and at the stop sign, turn right on Zion Road. Continue on Zion Road and it will turn into Massbach Road as you enter Jo Daviess County. Stay on Massbach Road (do not take a left at the "to Elizabeth" sign) and drive through Massbach. About 1 ½ mile north of Massbach, turn left on Skene Road and travel 2 miles to the farm lane. (Travelers from the south may also just follow the blue Massbach Ridge Winery signs and go 1 ½ mile north of the Winery to Skene Road.) Directional signs will be posted at Skene Road and on Route 20 at Derinda Road.

Contact Jerry or Marge Misek by email @ AcornAcres@sandprairie.net or phone 815-598-3215 with questions or for more information.

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