

Alvin C. Allison



Alvin C. Allison was born September 03, 1921, the son of Charter M. and Jesse Allison near Gibsonia, Pennsylvania. His father was a farmer and his mother a farmer and homemaker. Growing up on the farm, Al developed a keen interest in natural resources and the production of agriculture and forestry crops. He graduated from Mars High School at Mars, Pa., in 1938. He spent his first year of college at the Mont Alto campus of Penn State University before moving to the campus at State College. He waited tables and held other jobs to finance his education, and was a member of the Penn State ROTC before graduating in 1942 with a B.S. Degree in Forestry.

He worked as a farm forester and district forester throughout the state during his career and encouraged landowners to plant trees on their steepest slopes to help prevent erosion. He managed Lesage State Forest Nursery and the U.S. Forest Service Tree Nursery at Parsons where he worked to develop better seed sources and planting stock. Al was a leader in tree improvement work and helped establish superior seed plantations across the state for yellow poplar, Virginia pine, shortleaf pine, black walnut, black cherry and white pine. Seed continues to be collected from these sites today for use as growing stock.

In the 1960s, surface mining was rapidly expanding, dramatically increasing the seedlings needed for reclamation. The WVDOF was assigned the job of providing tree seedlings. Al oversaw an increase in seedling production from 4 million to 20 million to meet this mandate.

Al was a leader in American Chestnut research and established a research plantation at Clements Nursery. There, trees that exhibited resistance were planted, sold and distributed throughout the state in an effort to restore American Chestnut to its natural range. Much of the research was a cooperative effort with WVU and the American Chestnut Foundation.

Al was a life member of the Society of American Foresters. He was recognized with a 50-year membership plaque and served as the West Virginia Chapter Chair in 1958. For his distinguished service, the entry road off State Route 62 to the Clements Nursery was named Allison Drive in his honor. Al was a charter member of the Northeast Nurseryman's.

He authored an article, "Objectives, Methods of Establishment and Present Status of Seed Production Areas and Seed Orchards in West Virginia" and presented it to the 12th NE Forestry Improvement Conference in 1965. Al was very active with the Civitan Club and he received the club's Civitan of the Year award. In his various roles with the WVDOF, Al arranged and led countless tours of the three state forest nurseries. He especially enjoyed showing nursery operations to professional groups and youth groups. He was a Scout Troop leader in Charleston. He taught many classes at 4-H, FFA, and Scout camps and gatherings.

He was a member and supporter of "Friends of Extension," as well as a member and supporter of the West Virginia Humanities Council. Al was a member of "Friends of Old Time Music and Dance" (FOOTMAD). He was a skilled dancer and loved traditional Appalachian music.