

## **STOP GE Trees Campaign**

*a project of*

### **Global Justice Ecology Project**

**PO Box 412, Hinesburg, VT 05461**

**(802) 482-2689**

[www.nogetrees.org](http://www.nogetrees.org) / [www.globaljusticeecology.org](http://www.globaljusticeecology.org)

Dear Ally in the Campaign to STOP Genetically Engineered Trees,

Thank you for taking the time to help us stop the release of genetically engineered trees into the environment. This Action Tool Kit was developed to give you some tools to take action locally against GE trees.

You have now joined a growing movement in the U.S., Canada and across the world to prevent the potentially devastating establishment of GE tree plantations. On May 12th, the USDA approved a request by ArborGen, a GMO trees company, to plant 260,000 cold-tolerant genetically engineered eucalyptus trees in seven states along the U.S. Gulf Coast: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. ArborGen next plans to commercially release GE eucalyptus for planting on millions of acres in these states. They already have a request pending with the USDA to do this. In order to stop this threat, we need to build a powerful grassroots movement that can voice the growing public opposition to GE trees.

You will find enclosed in this tool kit the following:

- Information on the STOP GE Trees Campaign
- GE Trees Action Alert that you can download, copy and distribute
- A sample letter to the editor
- A sign-on letter to the USDA to prohibit the release of genetically engineered trees
- A poster to organize a showing of the GE trees DVD "A Silent Forest." The film may be ordered by contacting us at the above address, phone, email or website.
- A Public Service Announcement (PSA) for the film showing
- Sources for more information and listservs for staying up to date
- Instructions on using the enclosed tools.

Thank you for helping us win the fight to stop the genetic engineering of trees.

Sincerely,

Anne Petermann  
Coordinator  
STOP GE Trees Campaign

## **ABOUT THE STOP GE TREES CAMPAIGN**

THE STOP GE TREES CAMPAIGN was founded in January 2004, and includes Sierra Club, Rainforest Action Network, Forest Guild, ForestEthics, Dogwood Alliance, WildLaw, Southern Forests Network, Global Justice Ecology Project, ISE Biotechnology Project, Polaris Institute, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center, NW Resistance Against Genetic Engineering and GE Free Maine.

**STOP GE Trees Campaign Goals:** The goals of the STOP GE Trees Campaign are to prevent the commercialization of genetically engineered tree plantations and to remove any test plots of GE trees that have already been released into the environment.

**STOP GE Trees Campaign Objectives:** The main objectives of the STOP GE Trees Campaign are:

- a) Stop the deregulation (legalization) of GE eucalyptus and other GE forest trees in the U.S., Brazil or anywhere they are a threat;
- b) Create widespread public awareness of the dangers of GE trees through an aggressive and pro-active media and communications campaign against GE eucalyptus and all GE trees.
- c) Mobilize and train grassroots constituencies to counter the threat of GE trees in their regions;
- d) Build economic disincentives against GE trees.
- e) Tie the movement against GE trees to the growing movement for climate justice by exposing industry plans to use GE trees in climate mitigation and carbon offset schemes.

## **STOP GE Trees Activities:**

We will stop ArborGen's plans to deregulate GE eucalyptus trees through a combination of strategies including grassroots mobilizing, public education and legal challenges.

### **1. Comprehensive Legal Strategy**

**2. Grassroots Organizing Strategy:** We will mobilize grassroots constituencies in the regions directly threatened by proposed deployment of GE eucalyptus trees.

**3. Action:** Find groups throughout the southeast who can mobilize their constituencies for rallies, protests or media stunts around key events. Organize an national day of action against GE eucalyptus should it be approved by the USDA.

**4. Public Education Strategy:** Offer interviews on radio stations, get articles published through the international wire service, get press releases covered in regions newspapers and online publications, and reach upwards of 10 million people with information about the dangers of GE trees.

**5. Social Media:** In 2009, we solicited 20,000 anti-GE tree comments from the public. We are now developing online activism strategies using facebook, twitter, YouTube and our blog to get even more people involved in the campaign and to enable the campaign to go viral when the time is right.

**6. International Organizing:** Our 2010 international work will include: 1) a tour through Europe to present the dangers of GE trees to the EU Parliament, the Dutch Parliament and UN delegates, plus organizing meetings with other organizations and Indigenous Peoples Organizations; 2) Organizing, meetings and alliance building around both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, and the UN Climate Conference in Cancun.

For the latest information on the issue of GE trees, go to [www.nogetrees.org](http://www.nogetrees.org) or [www.globaljusticeecology.org/stopgetrees.php](http://www.globaljusticeecology.org/stopgetrees.php)

Contact the STOP GE Trees Campaign at [info@globaljusticeecology.org](mailto:info@globaljusticeecology.org) or go to [www.nogetrees.org](http://www.nogetrees.org)

## Instructions for Using the GE Trees Action Tool Kit

- 1) **Letter to the Editor:** Use the enclosed sample letter to the editor as a template to create a letter to your local newspaper that expresses your opinions about genetically engineered trees. Studies have shown that the Opinion page in the newspaper is the most read page, which means that writing a letter to the editor is a very effective way to reach thousands of people with information about the dangers of genetically engineered trees. Most letters are required to be under 250 words. Consult your local paper for letter to the editor submission guidelines. This can also be a good way to advertise a local showing of the GE trees video, *A Silent Forest*.
- 2) **Petition to the USDA:** Make copies of this sign-on letter circulate it at meetings and leave in locations where people can read and sign it. Your local coop, fair trade store, organic restaurant or resource center are good places to start. Make sure to collect the filled out copies and send them back to us.
- 3) **Poster:** Use the enclosed poster to advertise a showing of the GE trees documentary *A Silent Forest*. Be sure to fill in the information on the bottom of the poster. Photocopy and post widely.
  - a. **When:** insert day of week, date and time of day of the showing
  - b. **Where:** insert location including street address and town
  - c. **Cost:** insert “donation of \$xx requested”\* or “free and open to the public”
  - d. **For Info:** include contact phone number
- 4) **Video Showing Public Service Announcement:** Use this to advertise your local showing of the video in the calendars of local newspapers, weekly publications, newsletters, etc. Many publications have deadlines, so check first. Deadlines for local papers may be as early as two weeks before the event date. For newsletters, it could be a month or more. Fill in the when, where, cost and info as you did for the poster.
- 5) **Organizing a Showing.** Okay, you’ve decided you want to organize a showing. You’ve ordered a copy of the DVD *A Silent Forest* and now you’re not sure how to proceed. Here are some simple steps to get you started:
  - a. **Venue:** Identify a venue for the showing. This can be your living room, a classroom at the local grade school or university, the local peace and justice center or wherever ten or more people can comfortably gather to watch the DVD. Be sure the venue has a DVD player and TV, or a DVD player, projector and screen (best for larger venues).
  - b. **Co-Sponsors:** Think about local groups that might want to co-sponsor the showing with you. They may then be able to help with publicity work and get the word out to their members. They might have ideas about venues as well. Make sure to put their name on the poster and public service announcement (PSA).
  - c. **Publicity:** Use the sample letter to the editor, poster and PSA enclosed to get the word out about your event. If you have co-sponsors, ask them to send out an email to their members. Contact friends you think would be interested via email or phone. Ask them to tell others.
  - d. **Getting ready of the day of the event:** Make sure you get to the venue an hour ahead of time to arrange chairs, test the DVD equipment, put out literature, and mentally prepare yourself.
  - e. Consider using the showing to **organize a local chapter** of the STOP GE Trees Campaign.

Dear Editor,

[insert today's date]

On May 12th, the USDA approved a request by ArborGen, a GMO trees company, to plant 260,000 cold-tolerant genetically engineered eucalyptus trees in seven states along the U.S. Gulf Coast: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. ArborGen next plans to commercially release GE eucalyptus for planting on millions of acres in these states. They already have a request pending with the USDA to do this.

Eucalyptus plantations are notoriously destructive—causing deadly wildfires, depleting fresh water, and escaping into native forests where they displace biodiversity and wildlife. If commercially released, GE eucalyptus plantations would threaten to replace precious native hardwood forests in the South due to the increased financial incentive to replace slow-growing native forest stands with monoculture plantations of GE eucalyptus that mature in as few as 3-5 years.

The danger of GE cold-tolerant eucalyptus is not limited to the U.S., however. If perfected here, ArborGen intends to export GE eucalyptus around the world. The cold tolerance trait will greatly expand the range where eucalyptus plantations can be developed and spread the disaster of eucalyptus plantations to new ecosystems and communities.

GE Eucalyptus trees are just the beginning. If GE eucalyptus are approved, engineered versions of native trees like poplar and pine will surely follow—which will inevitably and irreversibly contaminate native forests.

A ban on the release of GE trees into the environment is absolutely critical and must be enacted immediately. As a concerned citizen I encourage others to learn more about this issue by visiting <http://nogetrees.org> and learn about the many ways to get involved and take action against genetically engineered trees.

Thank you.  
Sincerely,

[full name and affiliation, if any  
with town of residence and phone number]

**Stop GE Trees Petition: Sign on to the Letter Below Demanding Rejection of ArborGen's Request to Plant 260,000 Genetically Engineered Eucalyptus Trees Across the U.S. Southeast:**

To USDA/APHIS

We the undersigned oppose the planting over a quarter of a million GE eucalyptus across the U.S. South.

Approval of these field trials represents precedent setting approval for the large-scale outdoor release of GE trees that flower and produce seeds. This will facilitate the approval of commercial large-scale release of GE eucalyptus or other GE trees.

APHIS failed to conduct and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to comprehensively address all relevant issues related to the proposed GE Eucalyptus field trials.

Eucalyptus are not native to the U.S. but have become invasive in parts of California and Florida. Creating cold-tolerant eucalyptus will vastly expand the areas where it can become invasive. Because they are not native, they displace wildlife and other biodiversity.

In regions where droughts occur, eucalyptus are known to be at high risk of catching fire. Wildfires in eucalyptus grove in Australia in 2009, which were worsened by a drought, killed 173 people. Additionally, eucalyptus trees, with deep tap roots, use very large quantities of water. The U.S. Forest Service has stated that eucalyptus plantations lower water tables, and affect groundwater recharge and local stream flows, in some cases eliminating seasonal streams.

The fatal fungal pathogen, *Cryptococcus Gattii* has been found in the U.S. It can cause fatal fungal meningitis among people and animals that inhale its spores. One of the eucalyptus species used in the GE eucalyptus hybrid (*E. grandis*) is a known host for *Cryptococcus gattii*. Creating extensive habitat for this fatal fungal pathogen is dangerous and foolhardy.

I believe the GE eucalyptus field trials should be ended and the trees destroyed before it is too late.  
Sincerely,

Name	Address	Email
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**Film Showing:**

# A SILENT FOREST:

## The Growing Threat—Genetically Engineered Trees

Narrated by Dr. David Suzuki  
of PBS' *The Nature for Things*



“GE trees have the potential to wreak ecological havoc throughout the world’s native forests. GE Trees could also impact wildlife as well as rural and indigenous communities that depend on intact forests for their food, shelter, water, livelihood and cultural practices. As a geneticist, I believe there are far too many unknown and unanswered questions to be growing genetically engineered plants— food crops or trees—in open fields. GE trees should not be released into the environment in commercial plantations and any outdoor test plots or existing plantations should be removed.”

-- Dr. David

*Suzuki*

**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

**For info:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Co-sponsored by:** \_\_\_\_\_

[www.nogetrees.org](http://www.nogetrees.org) / [www.globaljusticeecology.org](http://www.globaljusticeecology.org)

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA) Date:**

**Contact:**

**Film Showing: *A Silent Forest: The Growing Threat—Genetically Engineered Trees***  
Narrated by Dr. David Suzuki of PBS' The Nature of Things

**When:**

**Where:**

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

**For information contact:**

In *A Silent Forest*, renowned geneticist Dr. David Suzuki challenges the genetic engineering of trees. In a letter of support to the campaign to stop genetically engineered trees, Dr. Suzuki states, "[GE trees] have the potential to wreak ecological havoc throughout the world's native forests. GE trees could also impact wildlife as well as rural and indigenous communities that depend on intact forests for their food, shelter, water, livelihood and cultural practices." He continues, "as a geneticist, I believe there are far too many unknown and unanswered questions to be growing genetically engineered plants—food crops or trees—in open fields. GE trees should not be released into the environment in commercial plantations and any outdoor test plots or existing plantations should be removed."

**This 45-minute documentary has been two years in the making. Produced by Three Americas, Inc. and Raindancer Films and Directed by Ed Schehl with consultation from Global Justice Ecology Project, *A Silent Forest* addresses the broad spectrum of concerns surrounding genetically engineered trees, from impacts on forests to wildlife to human health.**

**This showing is co-sponsored by:**

## **Webliography for Additional Information on Genetically Engineered Trees**

Stop GE Trees Campaign <http://www.nogetrees.org>

To download World Rainforest's Booklet on GE trees in English or Spanish go to <http://www.wrm.org.uy> then click on "publications" on the left side of the menu, click on "books" and scroll down to "Genetically Modified Trees, the Ultimate Threat to Forests," and download the PDF in English or Spanish.

**World Rainforest Movement's website** is also an excellent source for other information on genetically engineered trees, industrial timber plantations and carbon sink plantations. <http://www.wrm.org.uy>

**Animal Plant Health Inspection Service website.** Entities have to register with APHIS if they wish to develop test plots of GE plants. Site includes information on what companies and institutions are doing GE research, the traits and species being researched, the number and size of test plots and the state in which the test plots are located. <http://www.nbiap.vt.edu/cfdocs/fieldtests1.cfm>

### **GE Trees Listserv for updates on the GE trees issue**

To join the "frankentrees" listserv and receive emails with information and updates about GE trees (but no discussion), send a blank message to [Frankentree-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Frankentree-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).