

# CARES Recipient Profile

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**Farm:** Butler Tree Farm

**Location:** Highlands City, Polk County

**Date of Origination:** 1972

**Commodities:** Oak, holly, crepe myrtle, podocarpus, hedges and bamboo



Joel Butler and his wife Jane own and operate Butler Tree Farm in Highland City, Florida. The farm was established in 1972 after Mr. Butler graduated from college. They proudly produce woody ornamentals and trees for landscaping.

Mr. Butler has been implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for over five years. BMPs are a set of guidelines that advise producers on how to manage the water, nutrient, and pesticides they are using to reduce agriculture's impact on the state's natural resources. Butler Tree Farm uses a slow-release fertilizer that supplies a steady amount of nitrogen to the plant all season long and reduces the risk of leaching. Mr. Butler has removed 98% of the phosphorous from his soil that is used for his trees. Reducing this phosphorous from the potting soil decreases the amount that seeps out into the ground water. He also uses low-volume irrigation which uses 80% less water than overhead irrigation. Mr. Butler has taken proactive steps to set limestone rock under his soil media to prevent movement of nutrients, pesticides, and pollutants from the potting area.

Mr. Butler is involved in his local community. He and his wife are currently a part of the Highlands By The Lake Property Owner's Association and have sponsored numerous Little League Baseball teams. He is also a past-president of the local chapter of the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association. He and his wife enjoy working on the farm and traveling when time allows.

When asked why he believes it is important to be a farmer who CARES, Butler said, "To enjoy the diversity of wildlife on the farm, ensure water quality and to create a light footprint for the next generation."