

## A start-up hopes to create carbon-storing 'super-trees'. Hype or a possible breakthrough to address climate change?

At Living Carbon, [Patrick] Mellor is trying to design trees that grow faster and grab more carbon than their natural peers, as well as trees that resist rot, keeping that carbon out of the atmosphere. In February, less than four years after he co-founded it, the company made headlines by planting its first “photosynthesis-enhanced” poplar trees in a strip of bottomland forests in Georgia.

This is a breakthrough, clearly: it's the first forest in the United States that contains genetically engineered trees. But there's still much we don't know. How will these trees affect the rest of the forest? How far will their genes spread? And how good are they, really, at pulling more carbon from the atmosphere?

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Even Steve Strauss, a prominent tree geneticist at Oregon State University who briefly served on Living Carbon's scientific advisory board and is conducting field trials for the company, told me in the days before the first planting that the trees might not grow as well as natural poplars. “I'm kind of a little conflicted,” he said, “that they're going ahead with this—all the public relations and the financing—on something that we don't know if it works.”

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here\*\*](#)