

VITA

Robert J. Richardson was born the first of two children to Jerry and Mary Lou Richardson of Independence, Virginia, on December 2, 1974. He grew up on a beef cattle farm in southwest Virginia and graduated from Grayson County High School in 1992. Rob then went to Virginia Tech, where he received a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife and a M. S. in Vocational and Technical Education. While pursuing his degrees at Virginia Tech, Rob worked during the summer of 1995 as a Conservation Contact Ranger at Grayson Highlands State Park in Mouth of Wilson, VA, and worked the following summer as a Park Ranger at Prince William Forest Park in Triangle, VA. From 1996 to 1997, he worked in the ornamental plant pathology program of Dr. Jay Stipes where he assisted in the discovery of a virulent soil borne pathogen (*Fusarium oxysporum*) of the invasive tree *Ailanthus altissima*. After receiving his M. S. degree in 1997, Rob then taught school for one year at William Monroe Middle School in Stanardsville, VA, before returning to Virginia Tech to work on his Ph. D. under the direction of Dr. Henry Wilson. Rob completed the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Weed Science in April of 2002.