Generating Random Points in ArcGIS

A) Prepare a map document in ArcMap. Add any layers you need, including a polygon layer in which you would like to generate random points (e.g., stand boundaries). If necessary, select the polygon in which you would like the points contained. Verify that the data frame has the correct coordinate system defined.

B) Open ArcToolbox and open the Data Management Tools > Feature Class > Create random points tool.

C) As shown in the screen image on the following page, choose an output directory (A: use your H: drive) and a file name (B: random_points is suggested). If you have a constraining layer (C: a forest stand boundary or ownership boundary) select it. Enter the number of random points you need (D). Finally, if you need the points to be a minimum distance apart from one another, enter this value (E) and click OK. The points will be created and added to your map.

D) If you later need to identify your random points (which is likely), open the attribute table, right-click on the field heading CID and choose Field Calculator. Build an expression [FID]+1 and click OK. Your points should now be numbered from 1 to N. To add the coordinates for each point to the attribute table, open ArcToolbox > Data Management Tools > Features > Add XY Coordinates. Choose your random point shapefile and click OK. The fields POINT_X and POINT_Y will be added to the attribute table.