

# New York Forest Owners Association Capital District Chapter Newsletter

Volume 22, Issue 4

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## Message from the Chair



Summer is over and I welcome the fall. Although the summer started out very hot and dry, the rains and normal weather came just in time to keep our forests healthy. Some of the seed bearing trees were getting stressed and were dropping their fruit, but were eventually invigorated by the rains. It is unfortunate that the

invasive plants seemed to prosper more than the native species. The Japanese Stiltgrass and Asian Bittersweet are out of control in my woods. It is crucial that woodland owners keep a close watch for invasives, and take control measures before it is too late. One of the advantages of going on our Chapter woodswalks is the first hand knowledge and identification of invasives and possible control measures.

As you will see in this Newsletter, we had several interesting woodswalks, each so different than the other, that there was much to learn from each of them. Our annual picnic at Thacher Park was well attended, and everyone enjoyed the food and camaraderie. Carl Wiedemann, with some help from other chapter members finished his project at the Landis Arboretum in Esperance. They put together a trail guide and informational stops and officially opened the "Sustainable Forestry Trail" on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

Our Chapter activities slow down in the Fall, as most of us get back into our woodlands to hunt, replenish our firewood supply, work on Timber Stand Improvement, do a harvest, or just enjoy the natural surroundings. Clearing our access trails seem to be a never ending job, but it is so necessary to keep up with it.

Our Chapter membership is stable, but we lost a couple of members of our Steering Committee. If anyone wants to be more involved, please contact one of the Steering Committee members listed in this Newsletter. We meet on the second Tuesday of January, April, July and October. The meetings are less than 2 hours, and that is when we plan the events and woodswalks to keep our membership informed about sustainable forestry.

Enjoy your woodlands!

*Jim Bulich*

## Welcome New Members!

Elaine & Ray Albrecht

Westerlo, N.Y.

Bernie Buttles Jr.

Gansevort, N.Y.

Cynthia Parillo

Buskirk, N.Y.

## Gibbs Woodswalk – July 14

It takes a healthy amount of "disease" to maintain a healthy forest. The NYFOA walk on July 14<sup>th</sup> took us through healthy woods. Tree mortality we saw keeps the woods healthy by reducing competition for nutrients, water and sunlight. Reduced competition creates room for survivors to grow. Trees grow throughout their lives. For each two inches of tree growth there is 50% tree mortality. That is why a healthy forest is full of dead and dying trees. In death it takes years for trees to fall down and rot. Even though trees may live a century, most die in their infancy, as saplings and poles. Each year their numbers wane until the mature woods have fewer than 200 trees per acre. Cutting trees speeds this natural process by shifting growth to uncut trees. Cuts can change tree species composition more so than natural selection. The landowner decides what species to favor and how fast they want growth shifted to specimen trees.

We saw suppressed and intermediate tree crowns declining. Standing in the shade of over towering trees, the over topped trees cannot produce energy from photosynthesis. They cannot put roots down to water and nutrients. Cutting trees in the understory does not benefit over story trees. Aesthetics and hazards are improved by small tree removal and useful products are produced. The big gains in changing natural selection process is through cutting trees to remove competition in the over story. The work is efficient for cuts are among competing trees, some of which are high value. Cuts are done every few years when crown closures occur. Heavy cuts result in under utilization of the site by trees. The place to look for work needed is in the crowns of trees, especially crop trees and those that compete with them.

Your woods have another natural selection process ongoing. Dominant and co-dominant crown dieback occurs in sugar maples. The affected trees are irregularly scattered. Had maple sap streak been responsible the crown symptoms it would occur along woods roads where tree roots are damaged by vehicle wheels and pathogens enter the damaged roots. The lethal disease is not responsible for maple dieback in your woods. There is no evidenced of Forest tent caterpillar, the single most destructive insect of sugar maple. No one reported seeing hordes of caterpillars or the pesky predator, a lazy fly. Most maples had full, healthy crowns. I am left looking down for an answer. When the outmost branches show abnormal symptoms without evidence of causal agents of decline, it is the roots one focuses on.

Supporting this opinion (I am unanimous in my option) we saw evidence of shallow soil. Tree roots above the ground and shale outcrops occurred in scattered locations. Small trees grow well on minimal sites explaining why the dieback occurs in large trees. On poor sites large trees cannot obtain water needed during dry spells. In droughts leaves curl and leaf margins brown. Buds fail to open in spring following severe droughts. The crowns thin or they remain leafless after the spring flush of leaves on healthy trees. Leafed shoots appear on the tree trunks of declining trees – a condition that was pointed out to me. Wood borers and woodpecker feeding holes are evident in the late stages of tree decline. Sugar maple is prone to crown dieback associated with drought or dry sites. We are all familiar with sugar maple decline along our highways from the affects of deicing salts that interfere with root uptake of water. If you find crowns declining on maples on deep soils, have Charley cut the maples down to destroy the evidence contradicting my statements! If several declining maples on good soils and impractical for Charley to cut, you got me stumped. Call for another expert to get another opinion. Experts reside more than 50 miles from you woodlot. I am 18 miles according to GPS charts.

Some good comes from large tree mortality. The death of large trees opens the forest floor to sunlight. Sunlight promotes regeneration of trees, shrubs and herbs. The diverse plants growing in forest openings provide food and habitat for animals. Large openings are highly beneficial to wildlife including early successional birds. Many shade intolerant plants grown in larger openings. Openings up to 50 acres are needed for some species of birds to flourish.

Jim Bullich's identification of the Swamp White Oak was brilliant. It made me feel that I need to brush up on my tree identifications. Why swamp and not chestnut oak? We observed the swamp oaks in a swamp! Chestnut oaks grow on dry sites. Chestnut oak bark is thick and corky. Thick bark is a barrier to fire. Dry sites are fire prone. Chestnut oak potentially grows best on moist sites if it could compete with other oaks and hickory. Your swamp oaks are larger diameter than ones I saw on the Hudson River tidal freshwater marsh. Their large size indicates they are old trees. The wind toppled one behemoth oak. Eventually trees die from the tops down and rot from within or storms bring them to the earth. Jim's identification was a crowning success.



The story on Peter Smallidge and the slippery elm illustrates that all expert opinions are tentative. Three stories make clear my meaning: How did a caddy dispel Cornell scientist new "disease" of turf? The three entomologists were on hands and knees with hand lens peering at the brown splotches on the greens discussing the new disease of turf requiring research. The caddy piped in: "The brown spots are where the golf balls hit!" A Catholic priest asked a rhetorical question of me long ago? Why he asked was the spruce tree bark split? I pondered his question and confessed (appropriate to a priest) I did not know. He said my dear lad (I dreaded to hear the story but it was too late) that in his late teens his motorcycle kicked into gear, ran across the street and climbed the tree stripping bark which left a long term

wound. Oh, I thought, I can never know for sure about an individual tree. And if you think I am bested by the people I purport to help consider this: I was called to Niskayuna to identify a tree that produced a black pod. I was baffled by the pods hanging from a conifer. Fortunately one of the pods was labeled. I rang the doorbell and a woman answered. I asked her what she knew. She said a mailman ate his lunch under the tree. When he was done eating he twirled his arm around in a circle and drove away. I said the pod was from a Chiquita banana tree. She asked how I knew the name of the tree. I handed her the pod and said I read the food label. Peter slipped up on the slippery elm. There is always someone somewhere that knows more on something than the expert, although the expert may have more overall knowledge – I wonder though if the masses do not know best. The slightly tapering tree, tight bark, and root flare resembles that of American elm. I do not know who correctly identified the tree except it was not me.

The walkers were enthusiastic. They fielded lively questions and statements. Here is a short list of topics we touched on to illustrate the depth and scope of topics: hophornbeam used for whipple-tree and coal-like firewood; hemlock lumber and tannin; elm for baskets and French furniture; king pine and the white pine weevil; valuing trees by comparing hickory to oak stumps; crown thinning to cull the competitors; firewood and woods safety; sugar bush taping and wounding; identity of shrubs and herbaceous plants; garlic mustard's and fern's effects on tree growth and their control; garter snake and pileated woodpeckers; edible mushrooms; wood for cremation appropriately discussed at the cemetery. We covered these topics, often at the suggestion of participants who raised more questions and added more information than we had time to pursue.

We all saw the marvelous skill displayed in Mike Greason's marking and that of Charley who masterfully cut the marked trees and worked them into firewood. We saw the tools Charley used for safe and efficient removal of firewood. We saw in one another that each of us comes with unique skills and interests. Our objectives do not fall on the side of good or bad forestry but differ among us. Knowledge enables us to achieve our ends with more certainty and efficiency. Multiple use forestry is sustainable forestry and it is individualized as apparent from our walk and talk.

Best wishes to all.  
Mike Birmingham, Forester/Entomologist

Post Script: I suspect Jim had scouted the walk earlier and practiced his dendrology. I looked for old foot prints near the Swamp White Oak to match with his walking shoes, but the ground was too hard.

## Sustainable Forestry Trail

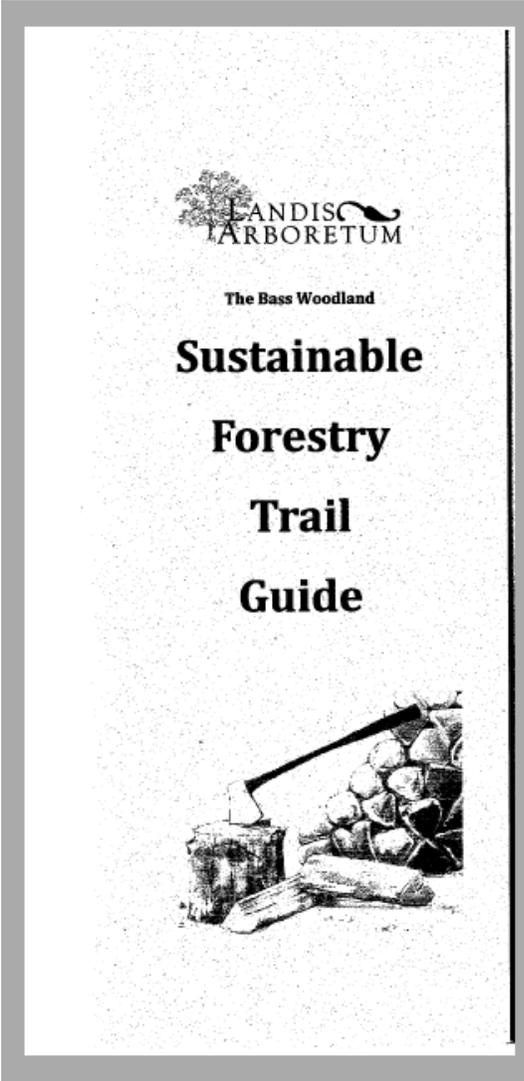
Several weeks ago the steering committee voted to support the development of a self guided forestry trail at Landis Arboretum in Esperance, Schoharie County. We worked with Fred Breglia, Executive Director of the arboretum to find a suitable location. The trail was completed this summer and officially opened September 15<sup>th</sup>.



From left to right Fred Breglia, Executive Director of Landis Arboretum, Ron Pedersen, Peg Pedersen, Jim Paley, President of Board of Trustees, and John Bartlett.

The Landis Arboretum in Esperance, New York was founded by Fred Lape on the former Oak Nose Farm, his boyhood family home. The Arboretum was established in 1951 and named for his friend, George Landis. Fred kept careful records of his plantings, providing valuable historical documentation of his efforts. Hard work made the transition from farm to arboretum possible. His friends, with the help of a few small grants, continued to plant and maintain the grounds.

Now beginning its second 50 years, the Landis Arboretum remains the only "Garden of Trees and Shrubs" in New York's Capital region. The Landis Arboretum is a valuable cultural and scientific resource that grows in size, scope and community impact.



## Chapter Picnic – July 29

The Capital District Chapter hosted a picnic for the membership at Thacher Park. The weather was pleasant and the food and company were good and plentiful.



This photo above shows Mike Birmingham, right, the official judge for the “shortest attendee” contest at work. Jim House, on the left, waits in line to be measured behind his grandson Brian Kennison Jr. To no one’s surprise Brian was eventually announced as the winner of event.



On the new Sustainable Forestry Trail



The picnic tables were filled by members of the Capital District Chapter at the Glen Doone picnic area.

## Wyman Tree Farm September 16th

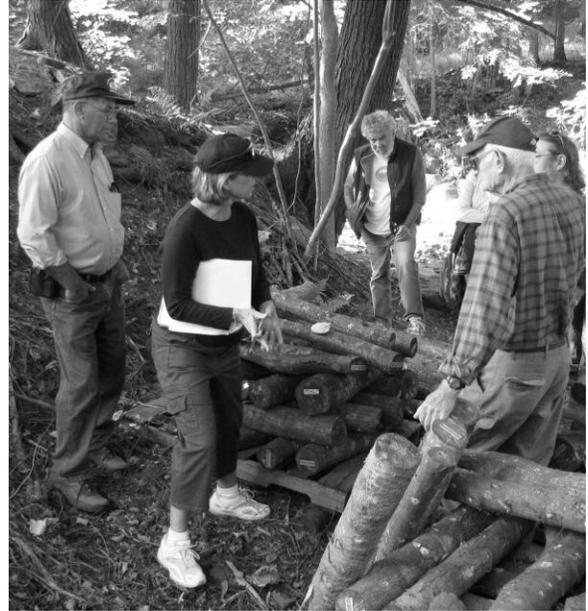


Rick Wyman admires the largest white pine tree on the property.



Marilyn Wyman tells about a timber sale that was recently completed on the property. A stand of overcrowded white pine was commercially thinned. The harvest was done by John Ruebel of Petersburg New York with a feller buncher and grapple skidder. The Wymans were very pleased with the result.

The Wyman's have been growing shiitake mushrooms on logs that were cut from the woodlot. Cultivating shiitake mushrooms is an opportunity to utilize healthy low-grade and small diameter trees.



Marilyn explained that one of the keys to successfully growing mushrooms in the forest is to find a cultivation site with an overstory canopy that provides the appropriate amount of shade. The Wymans use a ravine which provides access to water as well as superior shade.



Logs cut from healthy trees are inoculated with shiitake spawn inserted into holes made in the logs using a high-speed drill. The period of time during which the shiitake mycelium initially colonizes the log (the "spawn run") takes about a year.

## Best Techniques to Increase Forest Productivity & Value

A new publication was just released which was written specifically for family forest owners in the northeast. This is available on-line at the following address:

<http://www.nefainfo.org/publications.htm>

This paper represents readily adoptable practices to increase forest growth, productivity and value in the northeast. Though targeted for the family forest owner, this information is useful for all forest owners to review.

Approximately fifty percent of the forests in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine are overstocked or fully stocked. This means that trees in this region must vigorously compete for limited sunlight, water and soil nutrients because there are so many individual trees growing close together on an average wooded acre. As a result, the region's trees are, on average, growing much slower than they would be if they had ample resources, particularly sunlight.

In forest situations, all trees compete with one another for light, moisture, and nutrients. Efforts by the forest landowner to increase tree growth should focus on activities that redistribute light to those trees that also meet other landowner objectives. In even-aged woods, understanding how trees compete in the forest canopy is important. Also critical, is knowledge of where individual tree crowns are located in the canopy and how they will respond to the increased light that becomes available as the result of thinning efforts.

A rule of thumb: If the trees you are looking to release through a thinning have less than 30 percent of their total height in leafy crown, they will likely respond very poorly. Select trees to improve the overall quality of the forest or woodlot. If you make tree selections based only on size or species (for example, all the red and white oak), this may be a form of high-grading (taking the best trees and leaving poor trees during a harvest) unless the quality of the trees you are leaving is high.

Tree diameter does not necessarily represent age well. Harvests that are designed to cut just big trees, in order to release smaller diameter trees, may be poorly designed and will likely remove the best trees while potentially leaving the weakest unless the large trees are overmature and will begin to die. The use of poor thinning practices will greatly reduce overall productivity and future income, as well as significantly extending the time it takes to grow large, high-quality trees. A qualified forester should be consulted for these difficult decisions.

## Steering Committee

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\*State board of directors

Note: Any chapter member is welcome to join the steering committee. We need your ideas and extra help. Meetings are held every three months at the Colonie Town Library.

### Steering Committee Meeting Schedule:

October 9<sup>th</sup> – 6:30 p.m.  
January 8<sup>th</sup> – 6:30 p.m.

# A Mystery Car in Our Woodlot – What was it?

You never know what you might run across in the woods – stone walls, wild flowers, cellar holes, wolf trees, lime kilns, bogs, critters, coal bottoms, and even an old car – or is it a truck. This particular vehicle is puzzlement to me but maybe you recognize it. The only remains are a few body parts. There is no frame, no engine, no axels and no wheels. The rusted remains are near the cellar hole where a house once stood. Real property office records show that the property, which was farmed in the 1800's, was repossessed by the county in 1916 for unpaid back taxes. Chances are pretty good that the remains are not from a Duesenberg.

See if you can figure out what it was.

Clue #1 – the rear window of this vehicle was oval.



Back Window

Clue #2 – the hood has a handle so it can be lifted to provide access to the engine.



The Hood



A Fender

Clue #3 – Did it look like this? The fenders and hood look similar.

## Questions:

Was it a car or a truck?

What was the make?

What year?



Clue #3 – Was It This?

# **Join NYFOA!!**

## **Help Support Sustainable Forestry**

The New York Forest Owners Association is a not-for-profit organization established to encourage sustainable forestry practices and sound management of privately owned woodlands. Members include woodland owners and all others who care about the future of New York's trees and forests. Please consider joining because your support helps make a difference. Regular annual dues are just \$30.00 for an individual or \$35.00 for a family.

**Contact: NYFOA, P.O. Box 541, Lima, New York 14485 1-800-836-3566 [www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org)**