

## Chapter Woods Walk & MFO Refresher Presented at Michael Tree Farm

On May 19, 2018, the Michael Tree Farm was the site of a NYFOA Southern Tier woods walk, which also served with cooperation from the Cornell Cooperative Extension as a refresher course for members of the Master Forest Owner Program. The weather was wet, but did not deter the enthusiasm of the attendees which included Brett Chedzoy Regional MFO Coordinator for the Cooperative Extension Program, Michael Zagata, NYFOA, Director of Organization Development, and over two dozen Master Forest Owners, in addition to other NYFOA members. Participants traveled from as far as Jamestown and Albany, and everywhere in between.

The woods walk by Jerry Michael covered many aspects dealing with forest regeneration. Jerry covered many of his observations, and thoughts, in his pursuits to create a program at their family owned tree farm in Whitney Point, not only relevant to proper forest management for regeneration, but also for the recreational use, and the privacy it affords the family.



Brett Chedzoy and Jerry Michael opening comments with Ron Pedersen in the foreground (former NYFOA president 1999-2003)



Attendees gather for the start of the woods walk.

Jerry began with a discussion of the early years of the tree farm, and the destruction of a Red Pine stand due to the ice storm of 2003. The story of the tree farm goes back to when his mom and dad first purchased the land, and how during the years it progressed to a Christmas tree farm after his purchase from his parents, and how his children and their's are following the path he has put forward, and have started their own small stand of Christmas trees in addition to their forest regeneration efforts.



Jerry explains the early years and progression of the Michael Tree Farm

Along the woods walk Jerry explained how over the years the efforts and considerations have evolved to contain the esthetics the family enjoyed in the use of their land for the wildlife, and recreational uses it has offered the family over the years, including his son's wedding held deep in the woods. Jerry has kept a



great many large trees, which though they have no commercial value, have great value to the memories of his family.



Damage to red pine stand from 2003 ice storm

Jerry explained how this American Chestnut at 8 years old shows no signs yet of the Chestnut blight that destroyed these valuable trees. Other American Chestnuts must be grown in close vicinity so cross pollination can occur. The tree tube prevents deer and rodent damage. Tree tubes are used throughout the property to prevent damage to marketable timber from browsing and girdling by rodents. Though these chestnuts will not become marketable timber they still



provide valuable nut crops as mother trees for research towards blight resistant strains. Though tree tubes offer protection to young saplings, it can also cause damage to expanding trunks if the tube is not slit open during the tree trunk's growth. Not doing this would result in girdling the base of growing trees as they expand. The tube, once slit open, should be left on the tree to prevent rubbing by bucks. Jerry explained this girdling occurred on a dead red oak we passed during the walk where the tube was not slit to allow for expansion. The lesson being that tree tubes must be maintained for growth reasons, as well as removal of debris and nests which can affect growth.

Special thanks to Ron Pedersen for providing more than 100 tree tubes to woods walk participants to assist in their regeneration efforts.



Standing outside of a deer exclosure fence, it is evident of the damage from browsing on saplings growing outside from those inside of the exclosure. The exclosure which bears a sign dated 2014 demonstrates the effectiveness of the use of exclosure fencing in areas of young timber growth. Similar effects have been demonstrated with the use of timber slash techniques from the cutting of culled trees. It is important to cut the culls so they fall cross each other so as to protect the area from multiple directions rather than in a straight line.

Cornell has used this technique to protect young saplings from deer damage with slash piles 12' high by as much as 20' wide at their Arnot forest, much to the dismay of browsing deer. The slash technique offers an effective low cost approach for the landowner compared with the exclosure fencing approach.





Remember that successful forest regeneration is like a three-legged stool. It requires management of interfering vegetation, deer, and sunlight. If you don't deal with all three, the stool will not stand up.



Fringed Polygala or Gaywings (*polygala paucifolia*), Flowering Wintergreen, part of beautiful flora that line the maintained trails along the wood path.

Here Jerry explained how cutting a 1" oak sapling that was damaged by browsing, had been cut to the ground. It quickly regenerated by placing a tree tube over it. Because the previous sapling had an established root system, it appeared that the new sapling had an accelerated growth which put the tree at about 8' in less than 2 years time. Due to a bend near its top, the tree was cut at the top bud about a year into growth which produced yet another 2' surge in its growth.

What we can learn from this woods walk may best be summarized by a final hand out he provided at the conclusion of the walk.

In summary, tree shelters are useful for protecting planted seedlings, or browsed and coppiced natural regeneration in a small woodlot. However, material and labor cost, plus maintenance requirements make tree shelters impractical for large-scale regeneration projects. Deer exclusion fencing, or alternatives like "engineered brush barriers" can be a practical and affordable means of protecting regeneration on small to medium-sized woodlots. Planted hardwood seedling will not thrive as well as natural regeneration from seed.