



NYFOA
New York Forest Owners Association

Niagara Frontier Chapter

Spring 2020 Newsletter

Maple Season is upon us: Come join the club at a most interesting event on April 18th at 10 am.

NYFOA members Eric and Eleanor Randall will be graciously opening up their homestead to give us a sneak peek into the world of maple syrup production. It has been a very interesting winter(?) and sap flow started extremely early. Our hosts not only will show us the process but will allow us to sample some of the product at a pancake brunch.

But wait, there's more. Eric has volunteered to show us the different varieties of maple on his property. He has researched these trees for a large number of years and attempted to identify and cultivate trees of exceptional sugar content in their sap.

Not enough? We will also be hosting a "stump the experts" tree identification session. Bring your buds, bark and branches for identification. The event starts at 10 am. There will be a short woods walk followed by breakfast/brunch. NYFOA will provide pancakes with maple syrup, sausages and apple sauce. They will also provide plates, cutlery, and napkins. Bring your coffee mug and lawn chair. If you have a hand magnifying lens bring it along as well.

Dress for the weather, which can be quite fickle this time of year.

Eric and Eleanor Randall
10307 Smithley Road
Alexander, NY 14005

Meet your new Chair – Jean Gallo

Jean has a long history in forestry. In fact she owes her beginnings to lumber – her father harvested and sold some cherry logs to pay for her bill to get out of the hospital when she was born. She grew up on a farm in Baldwinsville, a small town north of Syracuse. Lumbering was one of the many tasks her dad performed. He operated a circle saw mill and would use an old reliable Farmall tractor to drag logs. Interestingly enough she still gets on that Super C to pull logs on our property. Its narrow front, tall tires, and separate brake pedals makes it possible to get it deep into and out of the backwoods dragging logs.

Her dad may not have practiced sustainable forestry but he instilled a reverence for nature. One of the things Jean said years ago was that she never she wanted to farm because she knew how hard it was. Well here it is many years later and, well you guessed it, here she is on 150 acres. Jean enjoys long walks in the woods, wine, sunsets, oh wait, wrong article. Actually she does enjoy going out on daily walks in the woods with our two German Shorthair Pointers. They have a reputation for running down and killing mice, moles, voles, rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, and just about anything else that gets in their sights. Fortunately skunks or porcupines have not been a part of their repertoire, yet.

Tops on her list of reasons for owning land is environmental stewardship. The land is there to improve, and not always for humans. The property has many different types of stands, anything from grass fields, shrubland, stands of hawthorns, to mature deciduous forest. The land is a former lake bottom, so it is flat and very good at holding water, perhaps too good. The predominant trees of value in the wooded areas are pin oak, white oak, burr oak, ash, hickory, and red and sugar maple. Hophornbeam, buckthorn, hawthorn, prickly ash, poison ivy, and wild and domestic grape vines flourish here as well.

Jean was instrumental in the construction of a timber frame barn built from trees on the property. This took a number of years, first to select correct trees – that meant dead ones, no cutting down beautiful growing trees, cutting and skidding logs, sawing on a mill, final cutting for assembly, pre-fitting pieces, then erection day with a crane. The finished product is a beauty, she sees a wedding barn as one of its future uses, more about the barn building in future newsletters.

Jean recognizes that she is relatively new to the club (and hence didn't realize how to say no to Bob and Pat Glidden as they made everything operate so smoothly and seemingly effortlessly) and she admits she has much to learn. In fact later in this newsletter she has a section where she wants to hear from you. So let's all give a huge thanks to Bob for his service as Chair and help out Jean as she takes over this role.

Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act - what does it mean for NYFOA?

On June 20, 2019 NY State passed one of the most progressive bills regarding environmental standards and goals for energy production. The bill will involve the DEC, a Climate Justice Working Group, a Climate Action Council, an Environmental Justice Advisory Group, and a Climate Justice Working Group, which together with other stakeholders will work to create a way for the state to limit its greenhouse emissions and reduce our fossil fuel use. Of note, they have set the goal of having 70 percent of electricity generated by load serving entities be from renewable resources by 2030. The legislation also requires a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent by 2050. These goals are, to put it mildly, a tall order.

How does forestry fit into all of this? One way is thanks to something known as carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration is the long-term removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and subsequent storage as organic carbon. This can be accomplished by trees, in the forms of aboveground biomass and roots as well as long-lived forest products, such as lumber. As forest owners control a large amount of land in this state, and this land contains trees, we have a very big, although neglected role in helping the state meet its goals. It is incumbent for us, as a group, to remind the groups and committees and councils above of our value as important stakeholders in this complicated equation.

What could/should we be doing as NYFOA members? Proper care of our land will go a long way towards sequestration. Carry out timber stand improvement, which will involve the removal of shorter-lived smaller species of flora to free up resources for longer-lived trees. Educate others about the value

of trees in fighting climate change. Recognize that there may be numerous solutions out there, and some may be controversial, such as the placement of solar or wind farms.

Get involved, let your legislators know the facts of the importance of forests in meeting the state's goals. Consider submitting your name for one of the groups mentioned above so that there is adequate representation of forestry needs.

Emerald Ash Borer – it's destruction to NY forests continues.

EAB, those three letters strike fear into forest owners. If you have not yet encountered Emerald Ash borer then take notice, you will. The destruction it has done continues to grow. Considering that ash is one of the most common trees in the state and has also seen widespread use in community plantings its demise is going to have a lasting impact with some unanticipated consequences. They are iridescent green insects but are very challenging to find. You will have more luck finding the larval stage under the tree bark. They escape through a small hole that is shaped like a capital D. How can such a small grub do so much damage? Their “galleries” or path of chewing is obvious once one removes the bark. Although the grub does not damage the wood of the tree it does kill the tree by girdling the cambium layer. This thin living layer right underneath the bark is the tree's lifeline – cut the entire way around a tree and you will kill it. (I tell my students that trees are merely a collection of drinking straws, really, really narrow straws, but lots of them.) Good luck seeing the mature insect.



Why here, why now? They originated in Asia and there are numerous now thanks to their accidental introduction. There are numerous theories how this occurred. One involves the possible carryover on pallet wood. Other theories abound, but one thing is certain, they are here. Interestingly enough in its home land it does not seem to be as lethal to their ash trees as they appear to produce more tannins and other compounds that limit the insects.

One of the first telltale signs of infestation is the presence of “bleached” appearance of the bark, mostly due to woodpeckers searching for the grubs. Infested trees typically do not survive longer than a year or two. Then the fun begins. Ash trees become brittle. Trees snap at unusual places (see the figures below.) Sometimes their roots rot and they fall over bringing with them a large mound of soil with the root ball. (Warning, cutting this away from the tree to get the log can cause the root ball to suddenly plop back into the hole it produced.) The brittle nature of dead ash makes walking in the woods dangerous during windy periods.



Can it be controlled? Well there are systemic poisons that do work but it would be cost prohibitive to do an entire forest. There are several species of tiny parasitic wasps that prey on them, but so far this has been ineffective in protecting our forest land. A fungus is also under consideration. There has been no rigorous testing yet of using something like *Bacillus thuringensis* (BT) for biological control. Some believe that there are survivor trees that may show resistance. Time will tell.

What will replace this void in our forests? That is the hardest question to answer. Ash is typically an early colonizing tree. Its abundance in some locations means that its loss will lead to plenty of light to the ground which unfortunately may allow for invasive species like buckthorn to take over. As had happened before with the American Chestnut and the American Elm we lose more and more of the diversity of species in our woodlands. It is difficult to recognize all of the collateral losses we will notice due to this tragedy. International trade with unrestricted rules regarding importation of biological material can have very dire consequences, we just seem to be slow to recognize this.

Is it spring? Really?

Our recent fluctuations in weather have had some interesting consequences. As I was cleaning a ditch for my sump pump drainage I saw something green and speckled moving – moving – in January. It was a leopard frog. I carefully placed it over in a marshy area and went back to clearing out weeds and ran across two more, then another. What is going on here? Most reptiles and amphibians have dug down into the soil by now to wait out the wintry cold. Do they have a chance to survive if they don't get deep down in the mud? Are they telling me something? Some amphibians, like the wood frog, are able to fill their bodies with an antifreeze protein and essentially freeze themselves. They appear dead – no heartbeat, no respiration. Must be nice to be able to just chill out, literally. Come spring they are somehow able to rejuvenate themselves.

Wearing a t-shirt in January, although nice, is a bit disconcerting. How will it affect trees? Will any start to pull water and sap up out of the ground only to have it freeze and cause much damage to the cells? Only time will tell. No frozen ground adds its own additional complications. For starters it is impossible to take implements of destruction (read that as tractors) into the woods for fear of getting stuck axle-deep in mud. The extended mud season also means twice-daily baths for the dogs, lucky for us they are German shorthair pointers so they don't hold too much mud and do dry quickly after their baths.

The warm weather also activated some other creatures – my honeybees. Actually they are active all winter in the hive keeping it at a constant 95 degrees Fahrenheit year-round. It is a challenge for a cold-blooded organism to generate heat, sadly some of the ones that fly out never make it back – they cool

off and fall to the ground. So why are they out there? I watched for a minute at the front door and saw something else amazing. (See photo.) Bees were coming back with pollen. How, and more importantly from what?

My mystery was solved a few days later when I walked in the woods and saw this. (See photo.) Witch hazel in bloom. Witch hazel, (Genus *Hamamelis*, of which there are several species) is a small tree or shrub, depending on how you classify it. It often presents itself as a multi-stemmed understory shrub. Winter is their blooming season. Their buds and leaves are found alternately on the branches. The flowers mature and produce seeds by fall. The leaves are oblong with scalloped edges. These leaves, along with the bark, can be used to make an astringent found in oils, salves, ointments, or water.



There is another tree which is similar in appearance but unrelated, hazelnut, also known as filbert nut (Genus *Corylus*). The two trees show a similar growth habit, and their leaves look similar, and they both bloom in the fall/winter. But there the similarities end. Male catkins hang down from the branches, the female flowers look just like buds, no pretty flower petals here. They also mature throughout the summer and are ready to be picked in the fall, if you can beat the squirrels to them. They are native to this area and I guess my bees could have been finding my trees for a pollen treat. There are numerous refined varieties that produce larger nuts. Nutella, a favorite spread in many families, is made of this nut and blended with chocolate. The tree does suffer from a blight and it can lead to the death of the tree.

I guess when the cold finally comes for good those bees will stay put in their hives until spring, when blooming season really begins.

Choose your trees wisely.

When you are looking for the ideal tree to use for lumber what do you look for? Long trunk with no branches, little to no taper, straight upward tree are our typical wants. Take a look at the photo on the left, perfect, right? Look at the same tree from the other side. Yikes!



Spring tree sales.

Spring brings thoughts of renewal, and for foresters, planting. Here are a few places to purchase. DEC tree sale - open to anyone.

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/treenurserybrochure.pdf

County soil and water conservation districts each have their own tree sales. They do not all offer the same selection of trees. They are pick-up only on particular dates and locations. To find the one for your county type in your county followed by swcd.com/Treeandshrub.html. An example is listed below.

Niagara County

<http://www.niagaraswcd.com/TreeandShrub.html>

Questions, questions, questions.

One of the challenges that the Committee deals with is understanding what you, the members, value most from the organization. Please consider mailing/emailing your thoughts about the following questions to Mark Gallo, the editor of this newsletter. He can be reached at mgallo@niagara.edu or (716) 525-5973 or at 2345 Ridge Rd, Ransomville, NY 14131.

1. What was your reason for joining the club?
2. What would make the club better?
3. What types of activities are your favorites (woodswalks, potluck meals, presentations by organizations, receiving the newsletter, others)?
4. Are there areas you would like to see more discussion? (legal, landowner rights, land use, environment, sustainability, hints/tips/tricks in forest management, ???)
5. Would you like to volunteer, either by becoming a Steering Committee member, or help distribute the word about the organization at other events (farm shows, outdoor expos, etc.)?
6. Interest in learning/showing other members in a how-to session (like bee, bird, or bat houses)?

Upcoming Events

NY State Farm Show. NY State Fairgrounds, Syracuse, NY. Feb 27-29, 2020. NYFOA has a booth and is always looking for volunteers to assist.

Rural Landowner Workshop. Cornell Cooperative Extension. Pioneer Central School, County Line Rd. Yorkshire, NY. March 7, 2020. Registration begins at 8:30 am, programming starts at 9:15 am

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