

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

September/October 2017



Member Profile: Abigail (Abby) Addington-May

Volume 55 Number 5



**THE NEW YORK
FOREST OWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

Officers & Directors

Charles Stackhouse, President
3010 Esperanza Rd
Bluff Point, NY 14478; (315) 536-9482
cstack14478@yahoo.com

Art Wagner, Vice-President
4250 E Tremont Ave,
Bronx, NY 10465; (718) 892-1964
awagbx@aol.com

Jerry Michael, Secretary
15 Van Kuren Dr
Binghamton, NY 13901; (607) 648-2941
GoTreeGo@stny.rr.com

Peter Tonetti, Treasurer
4884 E Lake Rd
Cazenovia, NY 13035; (315) 655-5733
pjtonetti@gmail.com

Vic & Deb Bandinelli, Lockport, (716) 434-9830
Renee Bouplon, Cambridge, (518) 692-7285
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Art Wagner, Bronx, (718) 892-1964
Lew Ward, Newfield, (607) 564-7506
Dave Williams, Bainbridge, (607) 563-3156
Frank Winkler, Andes, (845) 676-4825

Liana Gooding, Office Administrator
PO Box 541
Lima, NY 14485; (800) 836-3566
lgooding@nyfoa.org

Peter Smallidge, Ex-Officio Board Member
Cornell University, Fernow Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853; (607) 592 3640
pjs23@cornell.edu

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Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. 1-800-836-3566. Cost of family membership/subscription is \$45.



NYFOA
New York Forest Owners Association

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COVER: Abby's cousin Edgar (Wetzel's grandson) and his wife Ellen, July 2017. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of Abby Addington-May.

From The President

While visiting relatives in a retirement community in southern California, I enjoyed strolling around the 13 acre campus. The gardens were filled with colorful flowers and shrubs. The trees were magnificent, but a complete mystery to me. I could recognize obvious fruit trees like orange, lemon, avocado, and fig but none of the rest. Fortunately,



an arborist had tagged each tree with a label. I noted king palms, Mexican fan palms, incense cedar, California pepper, jacaranda, coast

redwood, holly oak, fern pine, coast live oak, Modesto ash, camphor tree, and Norfolk Island pine, among others.

I suspect that to many of our friends and neighbors, the trees growing in New York's forests are also a complete mystery. Jim Sterba in his book *Nature Wars* says "Americans spend 90% of their time indoors, and they pay more heed to nature conveniently packaged on their electronic screens than to the nature around them." Yet Sterba claims we are in essence forest dwellers, since 179 million people, or 58.2% of the total U.S. population live among a lot of trees.

For private woodland owners, knowing what trees are growing in their woods and learning the characteristics of these trees are essential in order to better manage these woodlands. Tree identification can be a fun project for youth groups like 4H or scouts. For

tree identification, there are a number of good field guides, smart phone apps, and websites. An excellent guide to 50 common trees in New York, *Know Your Trees* is available as a pdf download (cortland.cce.cornell.edu/resources/know-your-trees). A private woodlands owner needing help with tree identification could request a visit from a Master Forest Owner volunteer or a NYS DEC service forester as a starting point.

Please share this magazine with a neighbor and urge them to join NYFOA. By gaining more members, NYFOA's voice will become stronger!

As an all volunteer organization, NYFOA can use some help. We need a volunteer to work with our webmaster and website development company to set up a classified advertising section on our website. We are looking for someone to help complete our work in NYFOA marketing with clearly defined branding. Our membership committee needs several new people to work on some initiatives to increase our membership, as well as to work on next year's silent auction. NYFOA members do not have to serve on the state board of directors or on chapter steering committees to volunteer. Please contact me if you think you can help.

—Charles Stackhouse
NYFOA President

The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. NYFOA is a not-for-profit group of people who care about NYS's trees and forests and are interested in the thoughtful management of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

Join! NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests.

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Wanted: Landowners for Member Profiles!

Each issue of the New York Forest Owner magazine includes a member profile, or short biographical sketch of a NYFOA member, highlighting their activities and efforts in managing their woodlot. Are you a NYFOA member with a story to tell? If you would like to share your learning experiences with your woodlot owning peers we would like to hear from you. Success stories are great, and are of course welcome, but often lessons learned the hard way are the most instructive, so don't be shy about sharing those as well.

Of particular interest are stories highlighting your forest management planning and activities, with particular emphasis on forest regeneration, but as we all have travelled unique paths, a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and management goals is welcomed and encouraged.

If this sounds interesting to you, contact us and we will be in touch as time permits. The process is quite

painless, requiring only about 30 minutes for an interview with our profile writer, and the ability to send us a few high resolution digital photos of you and/or your woodlot (best is you IN your woodlot) to help illustrate the text of the profile.

Questions? Feel free to contact Jeff Joseph, NYFOA editorial committee chair, 529 Prospect Valley Road, Willseyville, NY 13864 or at (607) 659-5995 or via email at jeffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The New York Forest Owner*? If so, please send Liana an email (lgooding@nyfoa.org).

You will receive an email every two months that includes a PDF file of the publication. While being convenient for you – read *the Forest Owner* anytime, any place; this will also help to save the Association money as the cost of printing and postage continues to rise with each edition.

Welcome New Members

We welcome the following new members (who joined since the publishing of the last issue) to NYFOA and thank them for their interest in, and support of, the organization:

Name	Chapter
Amy Comfort	CNY
Jim Dann	SOT
Kristin & Matt Ferguson	NFC
Mike Foley	WFL
Dana & Renee Isaman	NFC
Albert Kraft	NFC
Jim Lockwood	AFC
Neal & Audrey Ryor	NAC
Wylie Spring	CDC
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(315) 558-1846
mmalmsh@syr.edu

Ask A Professional

BRETT CHEDZOY



Brett Chedzoy

Landowner questions are addressed by foresters and other natural resources professionals. Landowners should be careful when interpreting answers and applying this general advice to their property because landowner objectives and property conditions will influence specific management options. When in doubt, check with your regional DEC office or other service providers. Landowners are also encouraged to be active participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYFOA programs to gain additional, often site-specific, answers to questions. To submit a question, email to Peter Smallidge at pjs23@cornell.edu with an explicit mention of "Ask a Professional." Additional reading on various topics is available at www.forestconnect.info

Making Idle Land Productive

Question – My property has about 30 acres of brushy land and overgrown pasture. What are my options to make this useful for livestock? Also, I've heard that black locust has some

positive attributes, but I have also heard it is a bad plant. (Jeff M, WFL)

Answer – Throughout most humid regions of the US, the landscape is dotted with old farm fields and pastures that today grow trees and shrubs. Sometimes there are obvious

reasons why land was left to revert back to its natural state due to being too wet, stony, or steep. But many of these old field sites also grew back because the farmer no longer had the means or needs to keep the land open. These open lands can be put into annual production through some combination of trees (such as black locust) or livestock. Regardless of the underlying reasons, many of these 'what now appear to be' woodlots (or brush lots, if that's the image that comes to mind) offer ripe opportunity for productive and profitable grazing system expansion – especially when adjacent to existing pasture land, or available in large enough blocks to support a viable grazing operation.

There are many variables to consider when evaluating the potential of bringing idle land back into production for grazing. For starters, the land must be accessible and "fenceable", have a developable source of water, and be potentially productive enough to offset the



Figure 1. Silvopasture is a deliberate land management system that optimizes timber, forage and livestock. Pictured are cows using a conifer thicket for protection from wind.



Figure 2. Native and non-native plants can impede ownership objectives. Multiflora rose is a common plant that causes problems for owners through NY. Rose and some other species are good forage, other species less so.

necessary investments. If you can't check "yes" to these questions and there isn't a reasonable fix, then look to expand elsewhere for the time being. The next step is to come up with a (simple) plan for what will be done, who will do it, and when. Making sure there's a good "why" is also a recommended part of this planning. In other words, will it pencil out and contribute to your objectives?

The following are some of the important considerations for reclaiming former farmland:

Are there trees and shrubs worth leaving? If so, then developing the site into a silvopasture (openly-wooded) pasture may be the best option because quality trees can be cultivated as a future cash crop while at the same time provide shade, browse, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and many other benefits (Figure 1). And if grazing is the objective, why spend money clearing trees today that will yield profits tomorrow?

How many trees should be left? Silvopastures, like many things in life, are all about balance. From a forestry perspective, favor trees of good value, vigor, and quality that will continue to significantly appreciate in value. Trees that are of firewood quality today – and will most likely only become larger firewood trees in the future would be good candidates for culling, unless there is some other justification for leaving them. Some examples would be unusual species, or trees with special wildlife value like a nesting cavity or den. Silvopastures vs. woodlots can be thought of as a choice between growing the best trees on a given location together with either forage (in the case of silvopastures) or firewood (in the case of woodlots). For silvopastures, the firewood-quality trees are culled to reappportion sunlight to the ground level to grow quality forage plants. Getting enough sunlight on the ground is a critical step in silvopasture development, so avoid leaving too many "good trees". Consulting

foresters can provide invaluable expertise when contemplating an extensive woodlot thinning.

What about all that other green stuff? Trees intercept some of the precious sunlight needed to grow forages in the silvopasture understory – but so do all of the other plants and shrubs growing in the lower strata. Some of these plants and shrubs may be quality food sources or enhance the silvopasture in other ways. Others, however, may detract from the silvopasture because they are unpalatable, potentially harmful, or too aggressive in their growth habit, such as the so-called "forest invasive plants" like multiflora rose (although there are also many native plants that can be problematic, like some species of ferns). The "low shade" from the shrub & herbaceous layer is often more of an impediment to growing quality forages than the "high shade" of the main canopy trees (Figure 2). And unlike the culled trees that can often be utilized for things like firewood or sawtimber, these smaller plants are usually costly and difficult to control. Mechanical, chemical, and organic methods such as burning, shading (solarization), and livestock impacts (trampling, girdling, defoliating and rooting) are all options to consider for removing the lower interfering vegetation. Usually, a combination of these methods will give the best results – but each requires skilled and proper application.

So, I've gotten enough sunlight on the ground – now what? Daylighting the ground is the starting, not the ending point towards establishing quality silvopastures. The next two steps are to create favorable conditions for desirable plants to germinate, and then manage in a way that promotes their growth – while discouraging the growth of the undesirables. Germination requires a seed source and good

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Wild Things in Your Woodlands

KAREN CEBALLOS

PORCUPINE (*ERETHIZON DORSATUM*)



The porcupine is the second-largest rodent in North America, surpassed in size only by the beaver. They are usually yellowish-brown or black with white highlights in their quills. Porcupines are covered in about 30,000 of these quills, each hollow and up to 3 inches long. They can grow to be up to 2 to 3 feet in length, not including their tails of 6 to 12 inches. Females weigh around 15 pounds, while males can average around 23 pounds. Males and females look similar, though males are significantly larger.

Porcupines themselves are often hidden up in trees, but the signs of their shenanigans are evident across New York. Forest trees may be stunted and twisted from years of browsing, or wood siding and tool handles may be destroyed by gnawing teeth. Porcupines are found in coniferous and mixed forests, but have also adapted to live in grasslands, scrubland, and even harsher environments like the desert and tundra. They are found in Canada, the northeastern and western regions of the United States and northern Mexico.

Porcupines are solitary animals, except during the breeding season and winter when they may occasionally den together in caves, decaying logs, and hollow trees. Both males and females are territorial. In New York, porcupines spend most of their time in trees, with different trees used for

feeding and resting. The amount of time spent on the ground varies by region, and depends on how much groundcover there is for foraging and protection. Hemlocks are often chosen as resting and feeding trees because their thick foliage hides them from view and the sturdy trees have high nutritional value. Porcupines are generalists, feasting on a wide range of plant material, depending on the season. In winter, porcupines feed on conifer needles and tree bark, often feeding heavily on a single tree, causing severe damage or death to the tree. However, in the summer, they will eat twigs, roots, stems, berries, grasses and other vegetation, including nuts in the fall. They mostly feed nocturnally to take advantage of the changes in plant and leaf chemistry at night; by feeding at night they can get the added nutrients available during nighttime metabolic

processes of plants. Most people will also be quite familiar with porcupines' cravings for salt, driving them to chew on areas of collected roadside salt runoff or on tools with salt residue.

Porcupines are wonderfully adapted to the bitter northeastern winters, with thick fur and hollow quills to serve as insulation against low winter temperatures. They are also quite well suited to their arboreal lifestyle, with long, curved claws to hook into even the tiniest crevices, and single footpads covered with pebbled skin good for gripping trees. The underside of their tails have short backward-pointed bristles that serve as crampons. Porcupines lack quills on their belly and have no external genitalia because they spend so much time pressed against trees.

If one was searching for words to describe a porcupine's behavior, 'slow' is a good one with which to

start. But these animals can afford to be slow because of their very effective defense system. First of all, they can avoid most predators by staying out of reach high up in the trees. Their black and white coloring also serves as a warning system, effective for night-time and colorblind predators. The porcupine, wolverine, and skunk are the only North American mammals that have black and white colors because they are the only mammals that benefit from letting other animals know where they are at night. The porcupine's quills even contain a fluorescent pigment that makes them appear brighter. When threatened, a porcupine will chatter its teeth and erect its quills in all directions. They may release a warning odor, described as similar to human body odor, goats or some cheeses. If that doesn't turn the predator off, the porcupine will back up into the predator or swing its tail like a barbed mace. Contrary to popular belief, porcupines cannot "shoot" quills from their bodies. However, their quills are lightly attached to the porcupines, so if it hits the attacker the quills will become embedded. The experience is sure to be memorable, as the quills are coated in a "grease" that facilitates the penetration, and are full of tiny barbs that allow them to really lodge into the attacker's flesh. Body heat causes the barbs to expand, making them even more deeply embedded.

Porcupines are preyed upon by coyotes, mountain lions, and great horned owls, but their only specialized predator is the fisher. Fishers attack a porcupine's head repeatedly until it is wounded and disoriented, and then flips the porcupine on its back. Since fishers are agile tree climbers, porcupines cannot simply retreat further into the tree.

In contrast to their more dangerous properties, porcupine quills actually have antiseptic properties designed to protect the porcupine when it stabs itself with its own quills. Apparently this is a common enough occurrence, as porcupines are often tempted by

the tender buds and twigs at the end of branches, leading to frequent falls from great heights. Their hollow quills also make porcupines decent swimmers, as their quills help them stay afloat.

Breeding season occurs during fall and early winter, and involves vocalizations, courtship dances, and males fighting other males for the chance to sit in the same tree as the female and spray her with his urine. Once the mating occurs, gestation lasts for about 210 days, and the female gives birth to a single young in the spring or early summer. The young, called porcupettes, have soft quills at birth, which harden in the following days. Mothers provide all the maternal care, and the porcupettes become independent at about 5 months old. Porcupines have relatively long life expectancy, living up to 18 years of age. Mortality includes predation, starvation, falling out of a tree, or death by motor vehicle. Their longevity is likely limited by the grinding of their teeth, since porcupines over the age of 12 actually show diminished feeding and are smaller in size.

Automobile mortality is common; many porcupine are killed during springtime along highways where they congregate to feed on road salt. While the New York porcupine population is thriving currently, hemlock plays an important role in their winter foraging, so pests such as hemlock woolly adelgid may pose issues for future porcupine habitat. 🌲

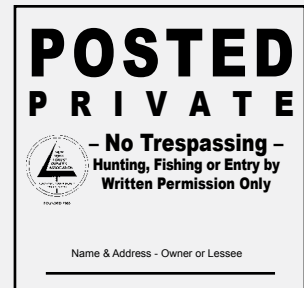
Karen Ceballos is the New York Master Naturalist Program Assistant Cornell Department of Natural Resources.

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Woodlot Management for Regeneration

Think Outside the Forest

FRANK WINKLER

Those of us serious about sustainable timber management know that too many deer will seriously devour desirable tree seedlings. This results in very poor timber regeneration and poor wildlife habitat for most species. In many areas of New York State this has become a serious problem that frequently goes unnoticed. Most of us enjoy seeing deer. Some of us enjoy hunting deer and want more deer to increase success. This is understandable, but without recognizing the consequences of too many deer we are creating severe adverse impacts such as poor forest regrowth, loss of many types of song birds and other wildlife, spread of Lyme disease, agricultural crop loss, and deer/car accidents. We have more deer problems even though in many places we have fewer deer. A

big part of this is caused by changes in agriculture. New York State has a very diverse landscape. Where farming is still active, there is more for deer to eat other than tree seedlings. Most farmers are tolerant to some crop loss, have large tracts, and are willing to harvest enough deer to keep losses within tolerable limits. However, where active farming no longer exists the most desirable food source for deer are those seedlings needed for the next generation of forest.

Every woodlot is a bit different, but where idle open fields coexist next to woodlots, there can be a relatively easy way to encourage a desirable high value alternative food source for deer. When these fields were actively farmed, grass forage was routinely harvested several times a year. Old mature forage

loses food value. The plant transitions from a highly digestible, high energy and high protein food when young to a much less desirable plant with low levels of digestible nutrients when mature. (Try eating some over-mature green beans or asparagus. You will begin to understand.) Livestock farmers that try to maximize grazing potential frequently utilize rotational grazing to allow their animals to harvest plants at the ideal time to maximize forage amount and forage quality. They may rotate animals through a pasture 7-8 times a year (very similar to mowing a lawn.) This intensity is certainly not necessary or at all practical for our needs. Deer typically have enough good quality vegetation throughout the spring and summer. If we can make this high quality vegetation available in the



Encouraging deer to graze in adjacent fields as opposed to in woodlands may help protect forest regeneration from overbrowsing. Image courtesy of Brett Chedzoy

late fall and on into the winter, we can begin to minimize the pressure deer put on our tree seedlings. However, those of us located on south facing valley slopes where deer yard up in winter will probably continue to have challenges with regeneration unless seedlings are directly protected.

A very simple start to enhance deer grazing would be to mow idle fields about 3 weeks before the first frost of autumn. This will recycle that undesirable mature forage growth and stimulate the more digestible and nutritious regrowth. This new growth can help support deer until the snow gets too deep (as well as when we have those frequent winter thaws.) Many people make one mowing of these types of fields in June and July. This makes for a nice looking green field throughout the summer, but that over-mature vegetation does not provide the food value when deer need it most. New York Audubon prefers delayed mowing until after August 20th to avoid baby wildlife. If mowing does take place at an early date, then for deer another early autumn mowing should be made to reset the forage for fall food value. Many fields have poor fertility causing poor growth. A soil test, and working with Cooperative Extension or an experienced crop business will get you headed in the right direction. This should provide enough fertilizer and


lime for aggressive growth. After this initial stimulation no further fertilization should be needed for many years. There are more detailed practices to further enhance existing forage. However, the need to totally destroy and replant a field will be rare. Proper mowing and fertility should do. When a reseeding is needed, forage fescues along with white clover will give good results for late fall forage value for many years. The use of annual food plots can provide a highly desirable food, but tend to be expensive, short lived, time consuming, and dependent on good weather conditions for establishment.

The amount of land needed for grazing is dependent on the productivity of the field, alternate desirable food sources (like apples, beechnuts, acorns) that you and your neighbors may be supplying, and the number of deer. Five to ten acres per hundred acres of woods should work well, especially when it is within a quarter mile of typical deer bedding sites. A productive acre should supply 1,500 pounds or more of dry matter over this 3 to 4 month period. If a deer eats about 4% of its body weight daily and has an average weight of 150 pounds, an acre would support about two deer, if this is their only food source. If more acreage is available, it would be better to only mow part on an annual basis. That old over mature hayfield does provide cover and grass

seed heads for many types of wildlife. Mowing these fields once every three years will still control undesirable woody growth, while also reducing maintenance cost.

Active timber stand improvement (especially when cutting in late fall or early winter), sustainable timber harvest, and hinge cuttings for wildlife will all increase low growing vegetation. All this can help provide an abundance of food, which will help minimize excessive damage to desirable tree seedlings.

Doing all these things will not be of any benefit to your forest regeneration if deer numbers become excessive. As stated, there is a limited carrying capacity to achieve a sustainable ecosystem. Nature will create a balance; sometimes by starvation or disease. Deer can be a beneficial resource, but must be controlled. Hunting is a rewarding experience for many to accomplish this control. Deer that have an ample high quality food source do become more nocturnal. At sunset they know they can quickly leave the woods to get their fill, bed down, and then get their fill again just before sunrise. This is easier than browsing the woods for oak and maple buds, (but they will eat them when convenient.)

Providing thoughtful management techniques to each unique forest owner's conditions can help us enjoy the benefits of the resource we want to protect and enhance. Just applying some basic cropping principles to what many of us already do can significantly benefit our forest. If you manage grass for deer, experience will help you fine tune conditions for your land. We can sustain more deer for observing and hunting, while growing trees for our next generation of forest. 

Frank Winkler is a retired USDA farm resource planner who has worked extensively in Wayne, Monroe and Delaware counties. High quality forage production was an integral part of the assistance he provided. Frank and his wife Vickie now reside on 110 acres of the original Winkler family farm. Forage management is an important part of successful forest regeneration on their farm.

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The Impact of EAB: Member Stories, Part I

JEFF JOSEPH

As most of our readers are aware, and has been documented previously in these pages, New York's ash trees—all 900 million or so of them (let that sink in for a minute)—are in the beginning stages of a rapid, mass dieoff due to the recent arrival of a non-native insect, the emerald ash borer (EAB). First discovered in the U.S. in Michigan in 2002, EAB spread rapidly, with the first confirmed infestation in NY found in Randolph, Cattaraugus County, in 2009. Currently 43 of New York's 62 counties are under quarantine, restricting movement of ash logs, lumber, firewood, nursery stock, and other byproducts (branches, woodchips, etc.).

Upon reaching an area, adult beetles lay eggs in ash bark crevices (of all *Fraxinus* species), and thereafter the feeding of EAB larvae quickly reduces the ability of a tree to conduct water and

nutrients, essentially starving it to death. Mortality is nearly 100%, and occurs rapidly, generally within 1-4 years.

While ash comprises "only" about 8% of all trees in New York, and will seldom grow in pure stands (other than in some reverting old fields), its numbers can be locally much higher, especially in the lake plain area of the state (it is least represented in the Adirondack region).

For some perspective on what we stand to lose, the following are some brief statistics:

- statewide, ash is the #1 most numerous tree species in New York in the seedling size class (>1" in diameter and greater than 12" tall);
- ash is #4 statewide in total numbers of saplings (1"-4.9" diameter);
- ash is also #4 statewide among trees 5" DBH and larger;

- in terms of standing sawtimber volume, ash is #6 in NY, with about 66 million board feet harvested annually;
- ash lumber is strong, stable, dries rapidly, has unique color and grain, and is well-suited to be used for flooring, furniture, baseball bats and tool handles, as well as for firewood, pallets, and a host of other purposes;

Clearly, short of some miraculous reprieve, the loss of ash will have a **HUGE** impact on the state's woodlands overall, on the forest ecology and species mix of those woodlands, on the forest products industry, and ultimately on us as woodlot owners.

The big takeaway from these statistics for me is the degree to which ash was poised to assume a much larger role in our woodlands into the future, as its dominance in the seedling class illustrates. In particular, ash has shown itself to be highly competitive on regenerating old fields, and exhibits a good degree of shade tolerance when young, which boosts its competitiveness in mixed forest regeneration. There will now be a great big hole in many timber stands that ash was going to fill—as if forest regeneration was not already enough of a challenge in our region. Perhaps most



Healthy ash stem.



Healthy ash bark—'ash' gray (of course) with distinctive diamond-shaped furrowing.



Ash stem with clear signs of woodpecker damage to outer bark—a reliable indicator of EAB.



EAB larval tunnels on an ash log from Greg Lessord's property—a fatal disruption of the tree's normal transport of water and nutrients.

daunting is the fact that it is estimated that less than 5% of New York's woodland area has yet to be infested—it seems that the worst of the onslaught is yet to come.

A while back I put out a request to hear from NYFOA members currently affected by EAB in order to share their stories with those of us (like myself) who have yet to experience it firsthand. I also thought this could serve as an historical document of sorts for future readers of the Forest Owner archives, so that they might have a feel for what this era was like for those affected by the loss of a tree species of major importance in such a short time span. The first response I received was from Greg Lessord, who graciously agreed to share his experience with us here.

Greg and his wife Kathy were recently profiled in these pages, in the May/June 2016 Forest Owner (Vol. 54, No. 3). He is a member of the Western Finger Lakes (WFL) chapter, is a NYFOA board member, and also serves as a Master Forest Owner (MFO) volunteer.

The following is a condensed and lightly edited version of the dialogue Greg and I recently had via email:

• **What is the location and size of your woodlot? How long you have owned it?**

Kathy and I bought our 81 acre farm

in the town of Ogden, in Monroe County in July of 2003—it had been farmed up until 1960. I grew up in the neighborhood and spent plenty of time around the property over 50 years watching the land revert back to forest. 17 acres are again being farmed and 64 are wooded. Twenty two acres are the original mature woods, approximately five are old apple/ pear orchards, and the remaining 37 or so are fields that have reverted back to woodland and brush. The woodlands are composed of nine stands ranging in size from 2 to 18.5 acres.

• **What types of management activities have you engaged in?**

We fumbled around for a few years on our own until about 2008 when we discovered NYFOA and joined. We had MFO's Dale Schaefer and David Deuel out, followed (on their urging) by DEC forester Mark Gooding, who by mid-2011 had our forest stewardship plan in place. Since then we have engaged in numerous projects: TSI, invasive removal, wildlife and tree planting, trail building, and more.

• **How much of a presence does ash have in your timber stands? What age/ size classes are represented? How has the arrival of EAB affected your overall management plan?**

All nine stands have significant ash

continued on page 14

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Holes in the canopy of Greg's woodlot as ash trees succumb to EAB.

present, white and green. The mature stands have trees up to 28" DBH and approximately 7-8% of those stems are ash. Other stands vary from 15% ash in the old orchards to as high as 60% (and 45-50 years old) in the reverted fields. Most management decisions now by necessity include addressing the ash in a stand.



As Greg has witnessed firsthand, EAB will infest the entire length of an ash stem, nearly to ground level.

Pre-EAB management favored well-formed ash stems during firewood or TSI work. TSI no longer can favor a nice ash over anything else. Post EAB infestation, 80% of cutting has been ash—a full 90% of all firewood cut is ash. With 60% loss of stems in one stand it will be a challenge to regrow with high deer density and over-abundance of invasives including multiflora rose, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, privet, and buckthorn. Soil type didn't seem to deter ash but only about 25% of our ground grows sugar maple. The 60% stand would yield plenty of sun for black cherry but is too wet and heavy soiled for it.

• When did you first discover EAB on your property? What was your initial reaction?

We have had EAB for a few years now. We noticed crown thinning 3 yrs. ago and woodpecker activity and pole timber mortality two years ago. Woodpecker activity has grown exponentially over last the two winters. This summer trees have fallen in high winds. We have had ash coming down in storms, something we haven't witnessed in the 14 years we've been here. They have been shearing just below ground and toppling without the root balls coming up too.

It is heartwrenching to witness as we try to picture the landscape of the future without them. You feel helpless. A couple of yard trees could be treated,

but 10,000 stems, no way. I would speculate a total loss of 25% of total stems over the nine stands. So many will rot and fall as there isn't enough time or resources to utilize them all.

• What is your strategy/plan now that EAB is there; are you working with a forester?

We began working with consulting forester Susan Keister in Jan. 2016 on two projects, to salvage ash in three stands with the most marketable timber covering about 27-28 acres, and per stewardship plan to do a commercial thinning over 18.5 of those same acres. We have a contract in place with Wagner Lumber, however weather has prevented entry to date. If we could change anything it would be to get at the salvage cut 12-18 months sooner not knowing how fast the stem quality will degrade. In addition to all the firewood harvesting we have cut 4 log trailers full of sawlogs to be milled 3rd week of August by a sawyer with a portable mill. We will use lumber on site for projects such as building an Adirondack style lean-to on the hill in the mature woods.



EAB emergence holes are about 1/8" in diameter and have a distinct "D" shape; 1/4" nut for scale.



Mature ash stem with its characteristic straight, limb free trunk, a familiar sight in many New York woodlots that future generations may never witness firsthand.

We will also be working with foresters on a regeneration plan. The total acreage that will be void of trees will make for a real challenge in regeneration, especially with the invasives we have that will be fighting over the sunshine and space. The stand 60+ % heavy with ash has had about 90% of it removed to date for firewood. That stand looks like a shelterwood cut without a deliberate effort to that effect. Natural regeneration there, if it can overcome the invasives onslaught, will be soft maple and swamp white oak, along with slippery elm.

• Are neighboring woodlots all similarly affected?

All the neighbors' woods are infested to our degree. Our friends in Bergen, Genesee County have been affected just as hard.


• Based upon your experience to date, what advice would you offer other woodland owners who are soon likely to be facing a similar situation?

We believe everyone will be in our shoes sooner than later. We recommend monitoring outlying neighborhoods for evidence of crown thinning, dieback, woodpecker activity in winter, and working with a forester to salvage what

you can before it loses value. Have yard trees treated before they show signs of decline. Start planning for how you will replace the losses—other tree species or perhaps native shrubs. The invasives will need to be addressed as they will surely find all that sunlight irresistible.

A few other points--our firewood trees are cut December and January. As we buck and split, the ash borer larvae would drop out from under the bark. Borer tunnels can be found from crown to a foot off the stump. Virtually any place a woodpecker has chipped away you can scrape through the bark and uncover the serpentine galley. As bad as our infestation is we have never seen an adult borer afield.


To replace the losses we are pondering trying new native species not currently present or growing more of those already here. Matching species to soils and drainage will be a big factor. Keeping up a large diversity will be paramount. 60% losses in one stand is a pill no one wants to swallow.

We would like to further document the effect of EAB on New York woodland owners with occasional pieces such as this one in future issues of the Forest Owner, so please continue to share your stories with us. With all the rapid changes afoot, it certainly is an interesting time to be a woodlot owner. 

Resources:

- For general, up to date EAB info for New York State: New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC): www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html
- New York Invasive Species information: www.nyis.info/?action=eab
- New York Forests 2012, USFS Northern Research Station Resource Bulletin NRS-98, 2015.

Jeff Joseph is a NYFOA board member who has been watching the maturing ash in his Tioga county woodlot like a hawk for signs of EAB, but has yet to discover its presence, despite being more or less surrounded by confirmed infestations around the state.


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Woodland Health

A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands

COORDINATED BY MARK WHITMORE

BACK SO SOON?

BY DYLAN PARRY

Got the blues again? Although it seems like the last outbreak just ended, forest tent caterpillar populations are on the rise across the Northeast. In fact, the last outbreak ended in 2006 for most afflicted areas of northern New York (2011 for the Southern Tier) and after 12 years, we were due for another population upswing. Going back into the 1880's, outbreaks have occurred about once a decade in New York with a few longer absences interspersed in the historical record. People have short memories though, and the sight of defoliated forests and millions of the hungry distinctive bluish caterpillars crawling everywhere always elicits great concern.

Populations of forest tent caterpillar reached outbreak densities across the Northeast last year with nearly 10,000 acres defoliated across New Hampshire and another 25,000 in Vermont. In New York, some of the first patches of defoliation were evident near Black Lake and along the Oswegatchie River in 2016, close to some of the first hit

sites in the 2002-2007 outbreak in the North Country. In 2017, the outbreak expanded with tracts of defoliated trees visible in several areas of St. Lawrence County as well as the eastern side of the Adirondack Park. Predicting the duration and extent of an outbreak is impossible, and whether this outbreak will be like the last one, the largest in more than 50 years, or the more typical smaller regional outbreak is anyone's guess.

It is important to recognize that the forest tent caterpillar is a native insect and the cycles of abundance and collapse are a natural component of a variety of northern hardwood and temperate deciduous forest types. In natural forests, it plays an important role, essentially thinning from below as the stress of defoliation eliminates suppressed and unhealthy trees. In managed stands, however, the effects of defoliation can interfere with many short and long term silvicultural objectives. Research has shown that forest tent caterpillar has profound effects on the growth of trees,

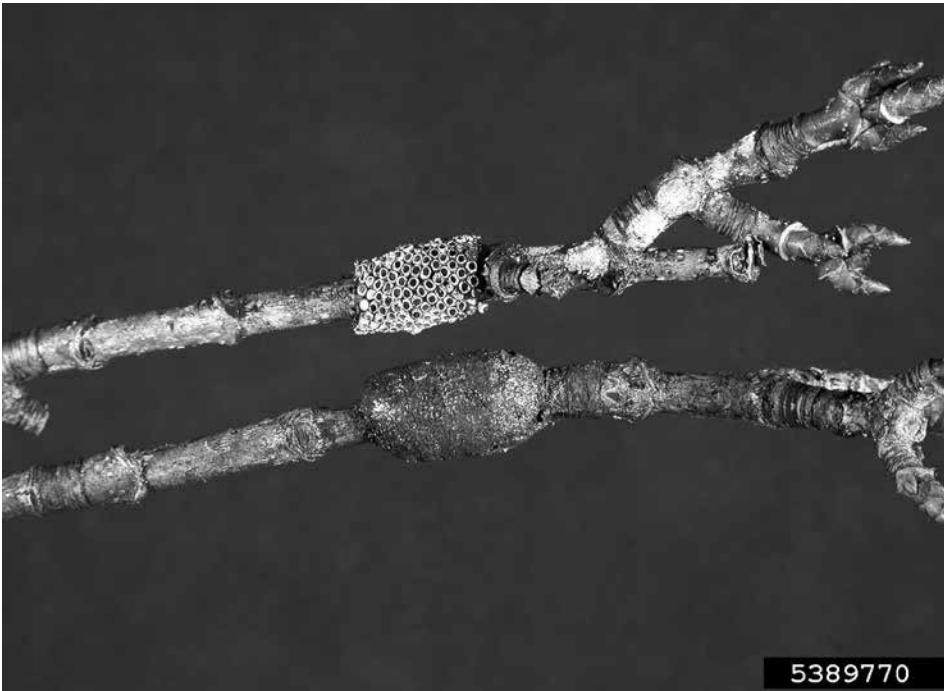
on competitive interactions between tree species, tree growth and mortality, nutrient cycling, and stand structure. Thus, consideration of preexisting stand conditions, site quality, species composition, and the landowner's ultimate goals are important in deciding whether a hands-off or more intervention oriented approach is warranted.

Should landowners be worried and what can or should they do? That is a tough question and depends on a lot of factors. The first thing to consider is that healthy hardwood trees are remarkably resilient to even severe defoliation episodes. On a good site, a healthy stand can withstand a single or even two consecutive years of complete defoliation with little long-term effect. Hardwood trees refoliate after leaf loss by breaking dormant buds and producing a second set of leaves. This is physiologically expensive as the tree is utilizing stored resources and diameter and height growth are reduced as the tree allocates resources to refoilation. Most trees will have some minor branch dieback following defoliation and suppressed or already unhealthy trees may die, although overall stand health is often little changed when measured after an outbreak subsides. On the other hand, when defoliation is coupled with additional stress factors such as drought and/or poor site quality, or when defoliation events occur for several years in succession, stand health can deteriorate rapidly. This year at least, most of the state received plenty of precipitation which should buffer trees against some of the negative effects of defoliation.

A longstanding question is the effects of forest tent caterpillar on maple syrup production. Surprisingly little research has been conducted on how defoliation affects either the quality or quantity produced. Defoliation reduces the production of current year resources and requires that the tree draw on reserves, which suggests that it must have some impact on syrup. An apt analogy might be withdrawing money from a retirement account to pay for house repairs. A good recommendation is that regardless of pre-defoliation stand health,



Forest Tent Caterpillar egg masses. Herbert A. 'Joe' Pase III, Texas A&M Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Forest Tent Caterpillar egg masses. Top egg mass is old and larvae have already emerged. Bottom egg mass is fresh and what you need to look for with a winter egg mass survey.
 Ronald S. Kelley, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Bugwood.org

forest owners should avoid inflicting any additional stress such as thinning or selective harvest until after the outbreak subsides. Trees undergoing defoliation have reduced capacity to recover from wounding whether it is from logging equipment or tap holes for syrup production. Management options for forest tent caterpillar are limited, in large part because of the spatial scale of outbreaks. It is certainly possible to protect small areas of high value trees for economic or aesthetic reasons (campgrounds or sugar bushes for example) but over larger areas, costs become prohibitive. Several insecticides are licensed for tent caterpillar control although success is often equivocal. For sugar bushes used for syrup production, only the biological agent *Bacillus thuringiensis* 'Bt' is registered. Although Bt, a microbial product derived from a bacterium, can work well, it has a relatively short window of efficacy. Bt is not a contact insecticide, caterpillars must ingest sprayed leaves, after which they will stop feeding and die. The challenge is that the larger caterpillars get, the more resistant they become. However, because they initiate feeding very early and often have devel-

oped considerably by mining the buds and feeding on newly emerged foliage, they have already grown significantly by the time leaves are large enough to effectively hold the spray droplets (~25% expanded). Spraying is also dependent on rain free periods of 48 hours or more, further decreasing the opportunity for application. In smaller treated areas (sugar bushes), wandering caterpillars may move into sprayed areas from adjacent untreated forests later in the season and re-infest stands protected earlier.

Deciding on a course of action is dependent on the short and long term management objectives for the forest. Predicting whether a given tract of land will be defoliated is a critical part of that decision making. For forest tent caterpillar, a sequential sampling method has been developed for predicting the likelihood that a stand will incur significant defoliation. The state of Vermont has been very proactive in providing information and tools to forest property owners in anticipation of the latest forest tent caterpillar outbreak. The VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation provides a succinct guide to the sequential sampling technique at

http://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Forest_and_Forestry/Forest_Health/Library/Forest%20Tent%20Caterpillar%20Egg%20Mass%20Survey%20Instructions.pdf. The process requires a spotting scope or very good quality binoculars as you must be able to count egg masses on 30" branch sections in the upper crown of sugar maple and determine if they are new (will hatch in the spring) or old (hatched the previous year). It is not a difficult technique, but does require a little patience and practice. Sequential sampling can be conducted any time after the leaves fall. Although not perfect, it can provide a reasonable estimate of the probability of defoliation occurring and can help the landowner make management decisions.

An important consideration is that forest tent caterpillar outbreaks are usually short-lived at any given location and typically consist of a year of light defoliation as the population builds, a year of heavy defoliation and then a decline in the local population as natural enemies proliferate (diseases such as the Nuclear Polyhedrosis Virus (NPV) virus and the fungus *Furia gastropachae*, and parasitic insects, especially the so-called 'friendly fly', the large, annoying gray-striped flies which attack the cocoons) and stress from food limitation reduces the population. Thus, spraying the area may not necessarily provide any significant advantages as the population may be declining anyway. On the other hand, if your forest has already been defoliated once, careful sequential sampling for egg masses is prudent as a second successive defoliation significantly increases the probability of dieback, decline, and whole tree mortality. So if you don't want to be singing the tent caterpillar blues next spring, invest some time in examining your trees for egg masses this fall or winter. 🌲

Dylan Parry, Associate Professor, Insect Ecologist, SUNY-ESF

Mark Whitmore is a forest entomologist in the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the chair of the NY Forest Health Advisory Council.

Ask a Professional (continued)

seed-soil contact, as well as other conditions like adequate moisture and temperature. Wooded areas surrounded by fields and pastures — or where there is still a remnant of forage plants — usually have a sufficient seed bank to spare the expense of supplemental seeding. Once a variety of herbaceous and woody plants start to grow in the increased sunlight levels, skilled management will be necessary to gradually shift the composition to primarily desirable species. When open pastures become too weedy, they can be mowed, sprayed, or even reseeded. Silvopastures have obstacles and usually require intensively-managed livestock impact to manage vegetation. Desirable impact with livestock can be achieved in different ways. Some examples are: rooting by pigs, bark girdling and defoliation with small goats, or trampling and crushing with heavy livestock that are grazed at very high densities or which are baited into brushy areas during winter feeding. Each of these has its pros and cons, but managed correctly could be an effective way to increasingly improve understory vegetation composition without unduly compromising animal performance, welfare, tree health, and other resources.

What about planting black locust?

Recently, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation added black locust to its list of restricted plants, meaning that it can potentially be invasive in some ecosystems — like the pine barrens of Albany and Long Island — and therefore should not be introduced in to new areas where it does not currently exist (though I struggle to think of any corner of NY where locust is not already well-established). This maligned reputation comes in part from locust's tenacity where other plants struggle (due to its ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen),

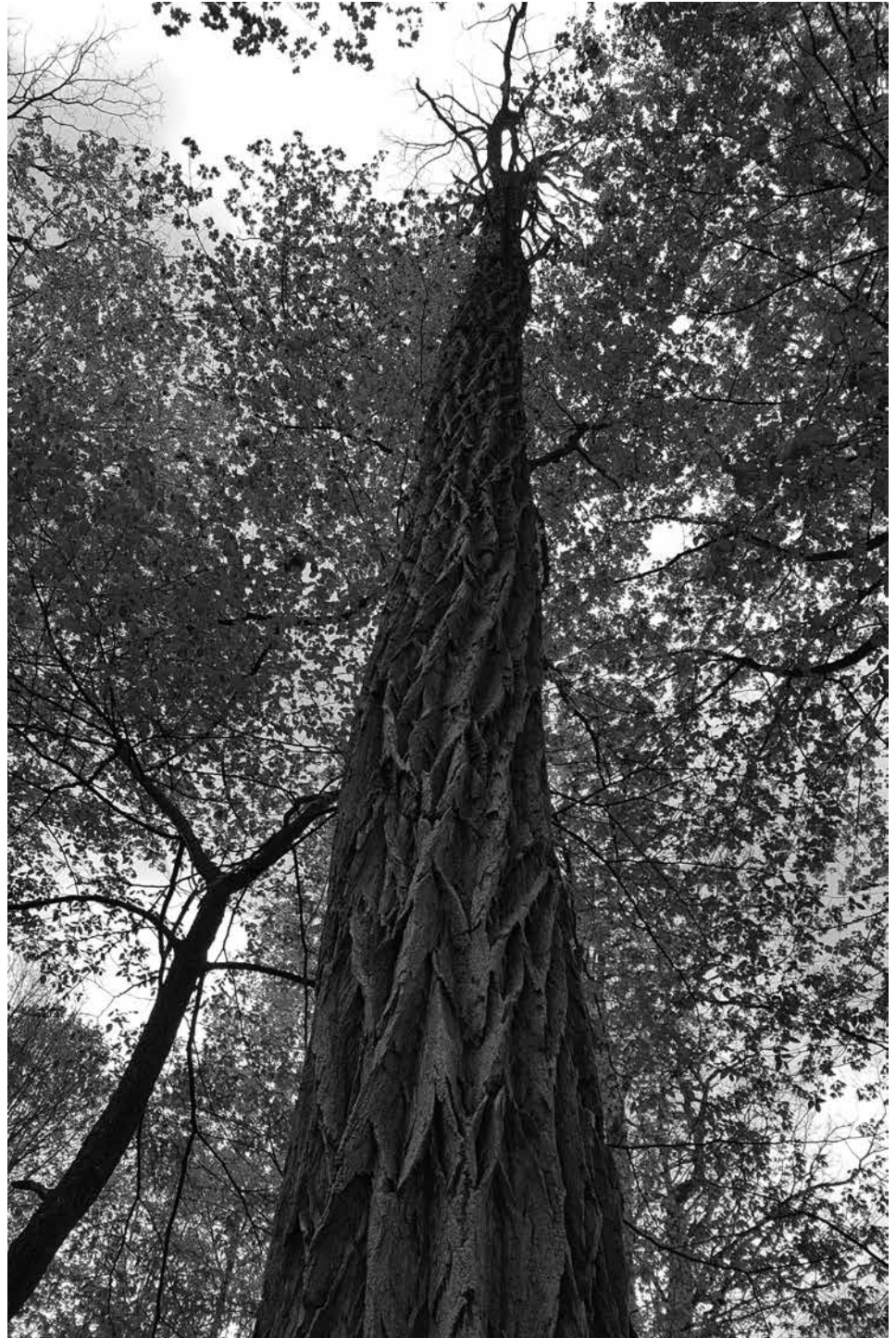


Figure 3. Black locust is common in much of NY, and can be a superior tree for plantations. Selection of planting stock will help ensure good genetics to produce straight and healthy trees.

and also its potential spread through seed production and suckering (root sprouting). Because of this tendency to spread into adjacent areas, it should not be planted near utility rights-of-way, roadways, or other locations

where trees could become a nuisance. With that disclaimer aside, locust is a near-ideal tree to grow on old-field sites where the alternatives are: A) mow (\$) at least annually; or, B) watch the field grow into multiflora

rose and other noxious plants; or, C) invest in a locust plantation that can be profitable and pleasurable.

For locust to grow well and be profitable, diligent site selection and preparation is a must. Locust can tolerate a wide-range of soils, but does best in fertile soils with good drainage. Locust will struggle on poorly drained or seasonally wet sites. Pure plantations are also more susceptible to common pests like locust borer and locust leafminer, so mixing it up with some other tree species will help. Deer, mice, and rabbits can also cause considerable damage to young trees if left unprotected. Once established, locust can be harvested for posts and firewood in as little as 10 years or gradually thinned to produce high-value sawtimber and poles within 30 years. And just how much money can be made from growing locust? Well, that all depends on numerous variables, only some

of which are under our control. One important variable, however, that will have a big influence on the economics is the genetic quality of the planting stock (Figure 3). Locust as a species can be highly variable in its growth habitat, ranging from an almost “bonsai” form to super-straight “shipmast” varieties. Cornell Cooperative Extension and the USDA NRCS Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Big Flats have been working on an “Improved Locust” project over the past several years to identify and disseminate superior strains, including varieties from Hungary where it has been imported, cultivated, and improved since the early 1700’s and now comprises about 20% of the country’s timber production. If you would like to learn more about black locust and its potential for your property, join us for a special one day black locust conference in Big Flats, NY at the USDA NRCS Plant Materials

Center on Friday, October 20th, 2017 Details are available at <https://googl/forms/rAc030HqL3FH6lww1> or by calling 607-535-7161.

Webinars on these topics are archived at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect. Resources and advice from fellow practitioners are available at Cornell’s silvopasture forum: www.silvopasturing.com; and forestry extension website: www.forestconnect.info

Brett Chedzoy is a regional extension forester for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County, and in his “spare time” manages his family’s 450-acre grazing operation, Angus Glen Farms, LLC in Watkins Glen, NY.

The column is coordinated by Peter Smalldige, NYS Extension Forester and Director, Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853. Contact Peter at pjs23@cornell.edu, or (607) 592 – 3640. Visit his website www.ForestConnect.info, and webinar archives at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect Support for ForestConnect is provided by the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and USDA NIFA.

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Abigail (Abby) Addington-May

BRIANA BINKERD-DALE

Abigail (Abby) Addington-May grew up in Long Island and now lives in Massachusetts with her husband Warren, daughter Jane, son Edgar and dog Chloe. Abby works from home as a corporate development manager for an electrical inspection company based in Seattle, where she lived for some time. Previously, she was in operations, sales and marketing for BP Marine in London, Houston and Seattle. Her husband Warren is an instructor for automotive technology at UTI (Universal Technical Institute), and Jane and Edgar are sophomores in college and high school, respectively.

Abby is relatively new to NYFOA, and forest management, but her family has been on their 109 acres on Platner Brook in Delhi for generations now. Her grandfather, Wetzel Swartz, purchased the original farm in 1942, back when it was popular for people in New York City area to come to the Catskills for clean cool air in summer. “Also, as was true for most of his generation, he and my grandmother were raised on farms and he wanted his piece of the earth,” Abby said. “My grandfather had a WWII victory garden on the flat at the bottom of the hill, and otherwise, the family has used it as a summer retreat.” The property was handed down

through the family, and Abby inherited it after her sister Caroline passed away in 2007.

Abby and Warren make the management decisions together. “We are just starting out, so are not sure how the work will be done yet,” Abby confessed. They just received their forest management plan from their forester, Ron Frisbee, whom Abby found on a referral list online. Recognizing his family name as an old Delhi name going back 12 generations or so, she figured she would give him a call. In addition to the information they get from their forester, Abby and Warren rely on NYFOA and Cornell Cooperative Extension, and every year they go to the Walton Fair and Abby stops at all the conservation booths. “I learned about the emerald ash borer so that when our forester was talking to us about harvesting the ash and why, I knew what he was talking about,” Abby said. “I love NYFOA’s magazine — I learn a lot, about other forest owners and what they are doing with their land.” She also learned about the bi-annual workshop for women forest owners, and plans to attend when the next one is held in 2018.

The property is mostly on a hillside; some features include two old meadows,



Anne Swartz-Reims (Abby’s aunt and Edgar’s mother) with Edgar’s brother Randy in the woods near the top of the hill, August 1957. Photo by uncle Gordon Reims, Anne’s husband.

old apple orchards and a spring (which used to feed into the house across the brook near the road – Abby and Warren hope to replumb it this year). There is a waterfall at the brook where an old mill pond used to be, in the mid 1800’s; the stacked slate foundation wall with sluice opening is still visible. A power line cuts across the property, which was hard to accept when the easement was taken by eminent domain in the late 1960s, but which the family now realizes gives them some lovely views from the top of the hill. The house is from 1850 and didn’t have plumbing when Abby’s grandfather Wetzel bought it; her grandparents replaced the old three hole outhouse with modern facilities.

Altogether, 62 of the 109 acres are forested — unforested land includes the 28 acre power line right of way, a 5 acre riparian buffer area, and 14 acres of old field meadow. The 62 forested acres comprise five stands ranging in size from pole timber to mature woods, with shallow to bedrock soils. Trees are mixed hemlock and hardwood, including sugar and red maples, black and yellow birch, beech, white ash, poplar, red oak, and black cherry.

There are several stands of trees identified in the management plan that Abby and Warren are planning to harvest selectively in the next few years to improve stand quality, protect against emerald ash borer,



Abby’s cousin Edgar, wife Ellen and their two dogs hiking up Platner Brook, July 2017.

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Cousin Edgar, daughter Jane and Abby at the top of the hill, 2000.

and provide regeneration opportunities. They plan to leave some woody material on the ground to help provide protection for tree seedlings from deer, and may consider installing some exclosures or utilizing tree tubes for the same purpose. Emerald ash borer (EAB) is getting closer to Delhi each year, so they are planning to remove the white ash with the first thinning in stands where it is prevalent, leaving isolated seed trees for future regeneration — potentially in conjunction with a ‘trap’ of stressed (via girdling) ash trees in a location away from the isolated seed trees to act as a decoy for EAB. Abby and Warren are also planning to monitor stands with hemlock for hemlock woolly adelgid, as it is in the county, and rejuvenate some of the old apple trees for wildlife.

“We are at the very beginning in relation to [managing] the land,” Abby said. “My husband has spent his spare time making sure that the 1850 farm house will not fall into the brook.” The finalization of the management plan and blazing of the property line was illuminating, as there were some sections of the property that Abby had never explored. They intend to start with some apple tree release and pruning this year, are eager to get the spring feeding into the house again and are researching how to do that. Their first tree thinning is planned for 2019.

Right now (and historically), the land’s primary use is recreational. Abby, her cousin Edgar, and the extended family have spent all of the major holidays and a couple of weeks in the summertime out there for as long as she can remember — she has been going out there since she was born. “We hike, pick apples and blackberries, and we have friends who hunt on the property,” Abby said. “We fish and swim

in the small pool at the base of the falls in the brook.” They also enjoy the rhubarb harvest every spring, planted next to the barn by Abby and Edgar’s grandfather, Wetzel. Watching wildlife is another regular pleasure — there is a heron that flies up and down the brook regularly, not to mention the resident bobcat that Abby heard on a walk with her son in 2010, years before a friend put up a trailcam and caught a photo of it. “I heard a motor, and thought someone was chainsawing, but then it stopped on a dime,” she laughed. “Motors don’t stop on a dime, they wind down. Then I realized that it sounded like a very big cat purring.”

The land has changed significantly since Abby and Edgar’s grandfather purchased it in 1942. The hillside was practically

bare then but now, except for the power line easement, it is fully covered with forest and grasses. The two meadows need to be managed to keep them from going back to forest also. The course of the brook, which had not changed perceptively between Abby’s childhood (late 1950’s) and 1985, has recently changed quite a bit. “The flood of 2006 completely stripped all vegetation from the brook bed and broke off some cherished pieces of our waterfall,” Abby remembers. The ‘hairwash’ was one of them — a well worn small fall, about 4 feet above a nice flat rock that was “perfect for setting up your shampoo, leaning over and getting a good wash. Remember, there’s no bathtub/shower in our old farmhouse” — the outhouse was replaced with just a sink/toilet.



Abby’s cousins Randy and Edgar surveying the property from the barn, August 1961. Photo by uncle Gordon Reims.



Barn in October 2014 (same vantage point as 1961 photo).



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Abby and Warren's biggest challenge when it comes to managing the property is the fact that they live four hours away, have kids in school, and can only come for long weekends and a few weeks in the summer. "The house is not insulated so we don't come in the winter. I'm trying to stretch out the season for us though — coming earlier in April and getting up in November," Abby said. The first thing Warren did when Abby inherited the farm was to buy a farm truck so that they could drive up to the top of the hill. "Until 2007 we would have to ford the brook on foot and hike up the steep hill, stopping in the shade of the stone fences between the meadows to rest before carrying on. Since we always were there in the summer time, these were hot hikes," Abby laughed. "So we would get to the top of the hill, take a gander at the view, then rush down to get a dip in the brook to cool off." Now that they use a farm truck to get up to the hill they spend a whole lot more time on the property, exploring the different sections.

Abby was inspired to get involved in forest management due to her love of the land. "We love Delhi, the Catskills and our little piece of heaven, and we want to be good stewards and keep it in the family for another five generations," she said. She most enjoys the permanence of the land. "I have been coming to Platner Brook since I was born, 62 years ago, and remember being here with my great-grandmother Rose and now with my daughter Jane — so five generations, the same hill, the same brook, seeing tiny cedars grow to be towering cedars in the course of my lifetime. I like seeing the changes." When asked about advice she would give to other forest owners, she laughed, "I'm not in a position to give advice yet, except to say, get out and enjoy your land!" 🌲

Briana Binkerd-Dale is a student in Environmental Biology and Applied Ecology at Cornell University. If you are interested in being featured in a member profile, please email Jeff Joseph at jeffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com

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