



# NYFOA

New York Forest Owners Association

**SOUTHEASTERN ADIRONDACK**

## The Overstory

Volume 31 Issue 2  
Fall 2020

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Lisa Meehan, Johnsonville  
Donald Whitbeck, Galway  
Alexander Zagoreos, Eagle Bridge

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New York State Department of  
Environmental Conservation  
[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html)

## A Forest of Sharing

By John R. Greenwood

On September 12, 2020, I attended the NYFOA Woodswalk on Polly and Erwin Fullerton's Tree Farm. I'd planned to document the day in a short article. I wanted to convey the feeling I left with that day in the title. The cream that kept rising to the top throughout the day was the visible—and audible joy that Erwin expressed as he shared his knowledge and stories about his picturesque property. Erwin's introduction created an air of generosity and cooperation that seemed to blanket everyone there. It's that 'air' that drew me to join NYFOA in the first place.

Three dozen like-minded people—masked and sanitized, gathered that perfect September day. I think we were all hoping to leave the grip of the Covid-19 epidemic in the rear-view for a few hours. Erwin's opening words set the tone, and within minutes of our arrival, he exceeded our expectations.

The welcoming "Family Forest" sign at the property's entrance was my first clue that the day would be special. The undulating dirt and gravel two-track through a grassy meadow leading into the woods cranked down my relaxation dial to a purr. As the Fullerton camp and outbuildings came into focus, a wave of Adirondack memories from my youth came flooding back. I hadn't even parked my truck, and I was already paid-in-full.

Pockets of NYFOA regulars and newbies began to congregate in and around Erwin's barn. They were greeted by an array of wood display pieces Erwin had arranged into a rustic museum setting. There were photographs, tree slices, burls, and more. They all included descriptions and interesting bits of information. The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake would be proud to possess the "Fullerton Collection." Masked members milled around, trying to identify old friends and acquaintances by eye and voice.

Here's an example of how these gatherings pay such long-lasting dividends. As the group waited for Erwin to begin his introduction, I noticed an unfamiliar couple standing alone quietly at the clearing's edge. My "curious writer" kicked in, so I approached them and introduced myself. Within a few short minutes, we had established a list of common interests and exchanged email addresses. Lois and Frank Marcigliano were the type of folks you could talk to for hours.



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It took minutes to find out Frank and I both enjoyed woodworking, and the Hudson River. It turns out he is a Board Member of the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Rondout. When I asked if he was familiar with the Sloop Clearwater, his eyes twinkled. He proudly explained the close relationship between the Maritime Museum and the Clearwater. Our conversation included a future invitation for a personal tour of the vessel. Another unexpected NYFOA bonus!

As Erwin called the group to order, his excitement about the large turnout was evident. He was glowing like a proud new father. Irwin was one of the founders of NYFOA. As he scanned the clearing and realized how many had shown up to walk through his woods, his words explained his glee, "This is a dream come true." This was the intent of the founders. Coordinate and educate your fellow forest owners. Share information and resources, all in the name of better land management and stewardship. He went on to tell the story of how he bought the property in 1967 after he spotted an ad in the local paper. He made an appointment, and with a map and compass, he explored the land. A small deposit and a bit of good luck turned into a lifelong relationship with an Adirondack dream. "I always wanted a pond!" - Erwin Fullerton.

There was no pond initially, but he built a three-acre beauty with an early settler's determination. In 2020 we got to view it in all its glory. The details of how he transformed an overgrown swamp into a thriving body of water will remain a personal story for those in attendance that day. It deserves that level of respect. Simply put, it was no easy task.

Erwin had taken great care to prepare a structured and informative walk for his guests that day. He split it up by topic. At our first stop, Erwin was joined by his friend and logger, G. Bob Baker. They used a large pine stump to explain the reasons why you take individual trees and not others. Quality, safety, location, esthetics, surrounding trees, and disease all come into play. These decisions can be complicated. The point that they were trying to make was the importance of doing your homework. Getting sound advice from a qualified forester or logger is smart stewardship.

Our second stop was an emotional one. We stood atop a rocky knoll where the remnants of recent forest fire were abundantly clear. As the group circled around Erwin, you could tell he was visibly affected by the moment. In 2019, less than a year prior, a caring neighbor called him at his home in Vermont to let him know there was a fire on his land. He went on to tell how 7-9 NYS Forest Rangers staged their vehicles at his property and, for the next three days, battled to knock down the fire that threatened his camp and outbuildings. His appreciation for his neighbor and for the dedication of those forest rangers was abundantly clear. They believed the fire began from a lightning strike. As Erwin stated when he spoke of the Hurricane of '38, the Ice Storm of '98, and the fire of 2019—"Sometimes nature throws you a curve."



**SAC members gather before the program begins**



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A large portion of what NYFOA does is educate people. At stop #3, Erwin and others talked about invasive species. I could dedicate an entire newsletter to the various questions and answers that came up during this stop. From invasive plants to invasive insects, it seemed everyone there that day had an experience or question they wanted to share. There is a lesson to be learned here. Being part of a group like this surrounds you with resources and contacts to aid you in your specific problem. Where you live, and the type of land you own varies the solutions. Not one size fits all. You may only maintain a sub-acre piece of property like me, but that doesn't limit your concern for the world around you. Staying involved and educated is important and crucial to how we leave this place to our children. The Fullerton's are positive examples of that premise.

The previous paragraph became even more evident at Stop #4. Wildlife plays an essential part in Erwin and Polly's decision making. Erwin showed us a power pole that a black bear used to sharpen his claws on in 1993. His voice was invigorated when he talked about deer hunting on his own land. Those stories I'm sure could entertain you for hours. He smiled, and we all joined him when he pointed to a deer stand he'd constructed. "Years ago, I wouldn't have been caught dead in one of those things!" He admitted his priorities have softened just a bit. He told of more recent days where he's more content watching a doe graze in peace and quiet. He talked about various plants and trees he used to remove because he believed they had no practical value. Never too old to learn, Erwin confided, "Knowing what I know now, I might have done some things differently."

Throughout the walk, Erwin shared many of the unexpected historical discoveries he'd made on his land. He told of a large pile of bark he'd run across near an old fence. Research later determined it was probably for the Glen Tannery that once operated a few miles away. The pile was most likely missed when clearing the land. He found old wine bottles and whiskey flasks he attributed to those before him who may have needed a little, "spiritual help." He'd uncovered oxen and horseshoes, logging chains, and other artifacts. Each find had a fascinating tale attached to the day it was discovered.

The walk ended overlooking the Fullerton's pond. It was an ideal setting to encapsulate the day. We'd learned more than just facts about tree farming and land management. We witnessed what it takes to live a happy and fulfilling life. It takes people like Polly and Erwin Fullerton sharing their wealth—not monetary wealth but inner wealth. The gift of sharing is a powerful tool when wielded with unselfish intentions. Wanting nothing in return but the joy of knowing you made someone feel better by your actions. Erwin summed the day up perfectly before our walk even began. When the group was gathered around listening to Erwin's introduction, he ended by asking if anyone had any questions they'd like to ask. I slowly raised my hand.

"Mr. Fullerton, what's the greatest joy you've gotten out of your property?"

Without hesitation, Erwin replied, "Spending time with my wife, Polly."



Erwin uses his hand-carved walking stick as a teachers pointer in his forest-size classroom.

This power pole doubles as a bear-claw sharpening station



## What do you do with Larch?

By Jame R. Peck (reprinted from the March/April 1993 Forest Owner)

What do you do with Larch? That's a question I first asked my supervisor Al Richard when I was a Forester Trainee exactly twenty years ago. (which is now 47 years ago) Al is a practical man of few words and I still remember his reply, "If we grow enough of it—they'll find a use for it!"

For many years, Larch served to amuse foresters and confuse landowners. The reason: Larch is a conifer (cone bearing tree) that loses its needles annually (deciduous.) Each Fall, when the hardwoods are finally bare, Larch needles turn an attractive yellow that changes to a golden-brown before they fall off. This little trick of nature has provided foresters with a lot of stories that usually start out: "I got a call about these dying pine trees and ...". Variations on the theme usually involve Christmas tree plantations for sale... cheap;; local reporters writing articles on acid rain damage; or "dead" landscape trees being cut down.

### WHICH LARCH?

Larch grows in the cool northern forests of Eurasia and North America. Larch isn't one species but a group of species. The different Larch species have slightly different growing requirements, but the technical properties of the woods are similar enough that buyers don't bother to distinguish between the different kinds.

Tamarack is New York's native Larch. We are close to the southern limit of its range so it's not surprising that Larch is found mostly in cold bogs and swamps. Under these conditions, the size and growth rate of Tamarack isn't exactly impressive. Experiments with Tamarack planted on upland sites in Maine have shown growth rates that challenge Southern Yellow Pine. I'm not aware of any Tamarack plantations in New York, so it's a pretty safe bet that Larch planted in rows isn't Tamarack.

No discussion of **Planted Larch in New York** would be complete without giving credit to Dave Cook formerly of the New York Conservation Department—he literally wrote a book with that title. He corresponded and swapped Larch seed, with people all over the world. He grew many races of Japanese and European Larch, and a hybrid cross called Dunkeld Larch on his Rensselaer County forest (Cooxrox Forest) starting in 1930.

He was also an excellent speaker and prolific writer who promoted Larch planting on both public and private land. In 1967, he received the Heiberg Memorial Award from NYFOA in recognition of his achievements in forestry.

Why was Dave Cook promoting Larch? Because Larch is one of the fastest growing conifers that we can raise here. Good Japanese Larch stock, for example, will outgrow other conifers commonly planted in the Northeast by more than two to one (Cook, 1971), and the trees do get tall! It's not uncommon to find an eighteen inch DBH tree with eighty useable feet to an eight inch top diameter.

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## The Tenacity of Trees....



**The Tree of Life**  
**Olympic National Park**  
**Washington**  
**(aka: Tree Root Cave)**

Source: <https://www.thekalalochlodge.com/explore/olympic-national-park/tree-of-life>



We had one sale on State Forest land which included 60 year old trees containing more than one-thousand board feet each. After the sale we received a call from a distressed hiker complaining about our cutting the last “old-growth” in that neck of the woods. Imagine her surprise, when she found out that the trees were younger than she was?

## POINTS ON PLANTING

The introduced Larch species adapted well to all but the most extreme soil conditions. Extremely dry soils will not sustain Larch through droughty years. Leave extremely wet soils to Tamarack, as the introduced species won't do well there. Larch needs soil that's at least 16" deep, because the roots need to go deep and wide to keep tall trees from tipping over.

I know it doesn't seem logical that a tree of the northern forests is sensitive to late frosts, but it is true. Late frosts are very damaging and may prove fatal to seedling and small sapling Larch. European Larch breaks dormancy later and seems to withstand frost better than Japanese Larch and is better adapted to the colder portions of northern New York. Avoid planting Larch in depressions that can fill with heavy cold air to form a frost pocket.

Soon after planting, Larch establishes itself and rapidly starts growing taller. This allows it to keep ahead of the hardwoods and brush and dominate the site. One thing you don't do with Larch, is plant it in a shaded location—it needs full sunlight to survive and prosper.

In many early Larch plantings the trees were spaced only six feet apart. Under these conditions Larch soon became crowded and needed to be thinned before they could get big enough to be sold for logs.

If they weren't thinned, the lower branches became heavily shaded and died leaving a relatively small crown to produce their food, which greatly reduced diameter growth.

I usually suggest landowners plant Larch 8'x10' or 10'x10' to reduce the need for a pre-commercial thinning. Every third row can be removed in the first thinning (probably about 25 years). This provides room for the trees to grow and the skidder to move. Some of the material should be large enough to be saleable for saw logs and the smaller material might find a use as firewood, fence posts or (in some locations) pulpwood.

## FUELWOOD?

We live in an area with abundant hardwoods and burning a softwood might seem like a novel idea, but in parts of the western United States, Alaska and the Scandinavian countries, softwood is often used for home heating. A full cord of air-dried Larch contains 10 million BTU's which is about the same heat content as the same volume of Cherry.



The Larch tree turns gold before they lose their needles

Larch is a good wood for kindling and works well to rebuild a slow fire or to warm the morning chill in the Spring. I've had good results building small, hot fires which burn relatively cleanly but require frequent refueling. Filling the stove completely with fuel and then restricting the air to get a long burn results in a smoldering fire that produces a lot of creosote, especially if the wood is a resinous softwood. If you must operate your stove to give a long burn use dense hardwood, inspect your chimney frequently and clean before creosote builds up to worrisome levels. Owners of catalytic stoves (which are designed to reduce creosote build up), Russian fireplaces and outside furnaces should have less trouble with creosote.

## FENCEPOSTS & PRESERVATIVES

We have had some success selling Larch fence posts. Our customers have told us that Larch posts last about ten years, which is comparable to White cedar posts that contain a lot of sapwood. Sapwood, regardless of the species, has little resistance to decay. The heartwood of some species, including Larch, contains deposits of natural preservative chemicals that retard the growth of the fungi that cause rot. Larch heartwood has a moderate resistance to decay. What this means is that Larch heartwood will last longer than Hemlock, but will rot faster than White oak when exposed to the damp conditions that favor fungi.

In critical installations in contact with the ground, only wood that has been properly treated with preservatives will give predictable, long service life.

Conventional wisdom says that Larch heartwood will not absorb enough waterborne wood preservative to make a product that meets industry standards. This is unfortunate, as pressure treated wood is a large softwood market in New York. Recent studies have shown the preservative retention in Larch heartwood can be greatly increased by incising. Incising is a process where the wood is slit in places along the grain with sharp knives to allow deeper penetration of preservatives. The process is rather like poking a tough steak full of holes with a fork to let tenderizer soak in. I doubt that New York wood preservers will feel that need to purchase incising machinery because of the abundance of easily treated Red Pine.

### LOG CABINS AND GUIDE BOATS

Larch's natural resistance to decay is one of its best selling points. Larch has long been used for planking on wooden fishing boats. The "knees" of the famous Adirondack guide boats were sawn from the stumps of Tamarack trees. The pioneers considered Tamarack to be a desirable species for pilings and posts and the first course of log cabins.

Larch is still being used in log homes today although the less dense pines dominate the market. I recently visited Josh Webb of Lok-N-Logs in Sherburne, New York to see how he makes hand crafted logs homes using the Scandinavian full-scribed method. In this method the logs are fitted and notched individually using chain saws and hand tools. The logs were fitted so closely that we couldn't blow air through the joints with an air compressor, even before a foam gasket was installed between the logs.

Josh prefers Larch because it's easy to get the 13" to 14" small end diameter logs and long logs he needs for his cabins. The wood's natural decay resistance is also a big plus, which he supplements by spraying the outside with a borate wood preservative. Josh uses logs that are bought in early June when the bark can easily be removed with a shovel and lets the logs dry through the Summer before building with them.

I don't like to see cabins assembled from small, green Larch logs as they sometimes develop deep spiral checks while drying. I also think I'd use a finish that contained an ultra violet (U.V.) light inhibitor on the outside of the cabin in order to prevent the wood from darkening.

### LUMBER & PULP

Larch lumber can be used for rough construction; it's strong, durable and holds nails well. Although putting a nail in dry Larch can be challenging. Many people that have used Larch prefer it to Hemlock for farm construction projects from hayracks to buildings. Proper lumber drying procedures must be followed, because some pieces show a tendency to distort. Mills are also using it for special purpose pallets and boxes. C.O.T. Corporation in Whitehall, NY makes plywood from Larch.

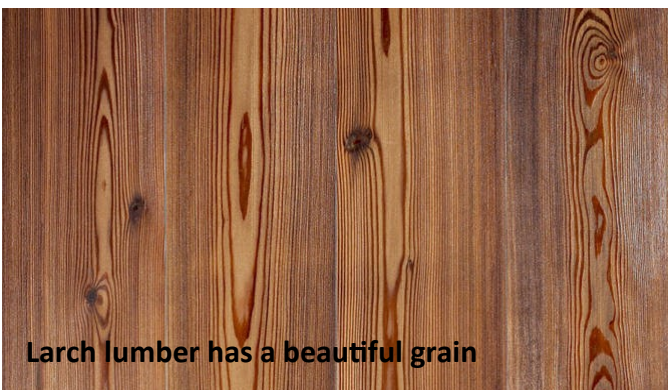
There's something else you should know about Larch lumber—it's downright pretty! It has a strong grain pattern and is an attractive medium reddish brown, rather like Cherry. One of our local sawmill owners even tried to sell it as "English Cherry". Despite his P.T.Barnum style salesmanship, his mill is no longer operating. When properly dried, Larch makes good flooring too. I suspect this is correct because Larch is one of the hardest commercial softwoods.

Pulp mills in New England and Pennsylvania make paper from Larch, but I'm not aware of any New York mill pulping it. The same chemicals that color the heartwood and give Larch its rot resistance complicate the pulping process.

There are lots of uses for this admirable tree, but buyers tend to be local niche markets, and stumpage prices are relatively low. We simply don't have enough Larch to sustain a large specialized industry. Only about 500 acres of New York are planted to Larch each year, so high volume mills haven't felt the need to "find a use for it".

If you have Larch to sell contact the DEC Wood Utilization and Marketing Forester in your Region for addresses of local buyers, or local specialty markets.

Early next November, about the same time DEC offices start taking calls about dying "pine" trees, take a moment to look up in the hills and appreciate Dave Cook's golden legacy.



## Chairman's Corner

Hi (Everyone )

In September I attended the deer slash wall seminar at Cornell Arnot Forest hosted by Peter Smallidge. I saw a slash wall regeneration area when I attended the NY Master Forest Owners Training Program at the Arnot Forest last year. I wanted to see for myself the difference a year could make. It was quite impressive. I am not sure the number of years of its existence, I think about 4. I saw that in the one year since I'd last seen the slash wall, the forest contained in the regeneration area grew considerably. Oak sprouts in the slash wall regeneration area were already knee high; growing like wet grass in June. I compared this to my own property with its numerous deer and poor regeneration. I have few oak sprouts above the ankle and no maple saplings. The deer over-browsing has deteriorated the seedling production, and diversity. Besides the tree growth rate, Pete Smallidge and Bret Chedzoy talked about the importance of speaking to your forester about slash walls before a logging. Creating a slash-wall will be breaking the normal contracting patterns between land owners, foresters and loggers. The logger would not be getting the undesirable trees as firewood. These trees would be used as a slash-wall around the freshly logged area to protect it from deer browse. The slash-wall, made up of a dense accumulation of low-value tree tops and stems at the perimeter of the regeneration area will give a better dollar return to the land owner concerned about deer browse, than conventional deer fencing. There will be less maintenance of fencing involved for future forest regeneration. When the storms drop limbs or trees on the slash-wall there will be no cost to replace the fencing and no hole for deer to go through. This will help ensure future harvesting quicker, which will help reset the future dollar basis. The money not gained on the current sale of undesirable trees as firewood or pulp wood is being reinvested in faster future growth. Getting a logging crew experienced in making a slash-wall is another issue. Very few loggers have experience with this type of logging and fencing. Once a crew learns how it's done, the amount of time to construct the slash wall gets faster and easier on the logging crew and thereby less expensive for the owner. I would suggest looking at the Cornell Forest Connect Web site for much more detailed information and suggesting the site to your forester. The Arnot Forest experimental area is about 100 acres. Cornell and other forestry groups are working out ways for smaller scale land owners to use similar techniques.

*Bruce*



Due to Covid 19 there have been no Steering Committee meetings and at this time there are no coming events planned.

Are you interested in hosting a woodswalk?

Do you have a suggestion for a chapter event?

If so please contact Kurt Edwards, event coordinator,

at 411 Beech Street, Mayfield, NY 12117, or at [edwardsk922@gmail.com](mailto:edwardsk922@gmail.com)



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