



# NYFOA

New York Forest Owners Association

**SOUTHEASTERN ADIRONDACK**

## The Overstory

Volume 37 Issue 1  
Spring 2026

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Neil A. Morse  
Jared Woodcock  
David Falvo  
Ronald Peters

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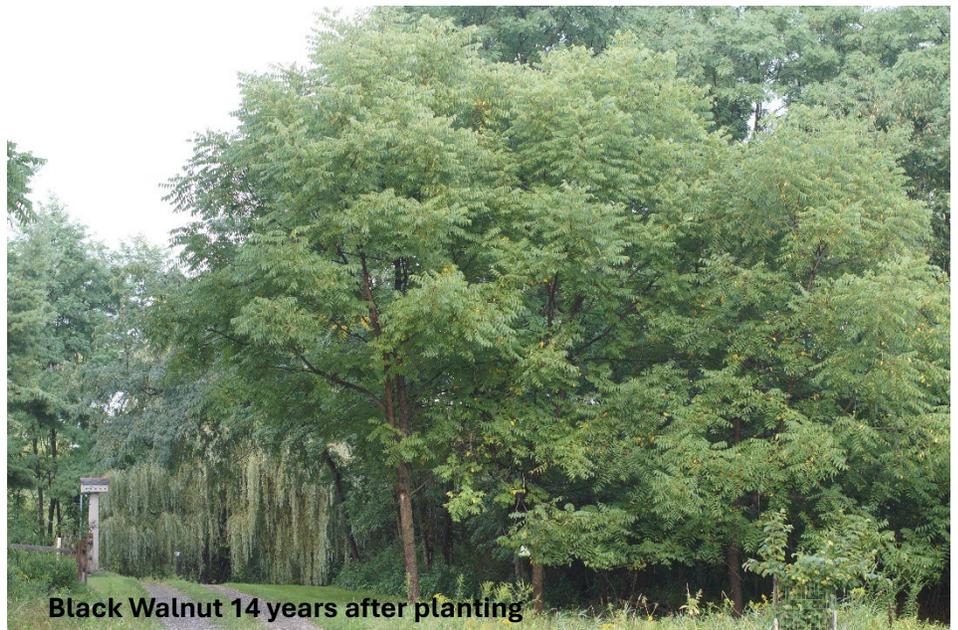
New York State Department of  
Environmental Conservation  
[www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html)

Join NYFOA at [nyfoa.org](http://nyfoa.org)

## Planting Nut Trees in a Tornado Blowdown

By Rolf Wentorf

Our experience with tree planting began in the spring of 1998, after five acres of our property was hit by a tornado [see "Adventures in Clearcutting - The Natural Way", *The New York forest Owner*, 36:6, Nov/Dec 1998]. The site is bordered by the Hoosick River in the northern region of Rensselaer County, not far from the town of Schaghticoke, and underlaid by mostly well-drained Castile gravely silty loam.



After salvaging the blow-down, we hoped to see the return of the forest we had known, encouraged by a crop of black cherry seedlings that had sprouted and which grew through the remaining piles of debris. In a few years, however, we lost the cherry to yearly insect attacks, and much of the site was taken over by vines and invasives. Something more was needed.

In the meantime, I had learned about agroforestry, the possibility of growing nut trees farther north, and had run across the New York Nut Growers Association (NYNGA - "ninja"), a volunteer organization with similarities to NYFOA. Some members of NYNGA, and other organizations in the U.S. and Canada, explore the

countryside for trees with edible nuts and fruits that have already adapted to the region. Some members are also Native Americans and have related cultural knowledge. Some have expertise in biological sciences and the creation of genetic hybrids, and some know how to plant, graft, pollinate, and process the crop.

People who create new hybrid varieties give them names such as “Slate” Hazelnut or “CW3” Heartnut. The volunteers are filling this role, because few, if any, institutions or organizations have the persistence or long-term funding that lasts a lifetime - a single tree generation, one step in the process, often takes more than a decade to reach reproductive maturity. A new variety needs to have good tasting nuts, that are easily cracked with intact nut meats, while maintaining some insect and disease resistance.

Grafting attempts to shortcut the process by skillfully attaching desirable branch material onto a hardy stock already growing on the site, but only that branch of that tree will produce the better tasting nuts, and those nuts from that branch will not have the hardy stock genes. The downside of planting nuts, I was told, is that typically only about 30% of the trees may produce nuts in the first 15-20 years.

Our goal was to experiment with nut or fruit trees, in an agro-forestry sense, with late season hay - Birdsfoot Trefoil and Timothy, where the hay would be an initial crop, and a backup in case the nut trees failed. Experimental, because some people we talked to were skeptical that the species we chose could survive, even though we knew, from our NYNGA friends, that they were growing in New York. Even if we did not survive or continue to own the land long enough to harvest, the trees could act as additional species for forest resilience, and as a seed source for future nut growers.

A year after the tornado, we had started with NYS DEC Black Walnut bare root stock, in a few open areas of ground near our driveway. We learned we needed tree protectors. We suffered at least 50% mortality after three years, with most lost in the first growing season, due in part to the difficulty in keeping the roots straight and moist.

Agroforestry, using hay and trees, needed the stumps, damaged trees, debris and unwanted vegetation to be removed. It was piled along the field edges to discourage deer, but probably not high enough, nor were the entrances blocked well enough to be effective. While operating the bulldozer, it was surprising how hard and compacted the soil was directly underneath the larger trees.

I learned that a well-drained soil, with any hardpan broken up by deep tillage, allows oxygen to be drawn into the soil, and to the roots, specifically, by pulling down oxygen rich air into the soil as the water level subsides after each rainstorm.

The next step was to run a tractor drawn subsoiler, followed by a large diameter disk plow, over the clearing to break existing roots, loosen the deeper soils, and bury weeds and undesirable seeds. The subsoiler pulled up large rocks, which helped protect the disk plow, plus the rocks are handy for other projects. Limestone was applied, using Cornell soil testing recommendations for hay. The last steps were a light disking, spreading the hay seed, and a light dragging with tree branches to help mix and press the seed into the top layer of soil. Next, hope for rain. The field preparations occurred in the years 2007-2008.

By 2009, we had John Gordon’s online guide [*Nut Growing Ontario Style*, Society of Ontario Nut Growers, 1979-1992], several bags of nuts from NYNGA members, and we could now start in earnest.

We germinated the nuts in slotted PVC pipe sections, as described by Peter Haarman [“Making PVC Pipe Pots for Transplanting”, Peter Haarman, *The Nutshell*, June 2007, NNGA], minimizing root exposure and disturbance during planting.



Seedling pots were made from 4" PVC drain pipe, sawn into about 16" lengths and then sawn down lengthwise once to allow for expansion when pushing the soil/seedling mass into the hole. (see picture on page 2)

The seedling pots were racked in hinged protective cages, (picture to the right), covered by layers of apparently deer/rodent proof chicken wire, and placed near the house to be easily watered by the garden hose. After a year of growth, the cages were transported along the field rows on the back of the tractor with forks, while the front loader bucket carried our tools, water, and supplies.



We sub-soiled along the rows again, over-dug past root depth with a hand post-hole digger, and placed a mix of bone meal, native and potting soil underneath the new roots. We brought water along with us and gave each seedling about 1-2 gallons. I'm not sure the weed control cloth really helped with the weeds, but it may have discouraged less ambitious rodents, especially when combined with rocks around the base of the tree protectors, so the smaller rocks accumulated from the field tillage and digging were put to good use. Tree protectors were added last, staked carefully near, but not in the hole. Planting took a few days on the weekends. When planting from pots, there is no rush, and in fact, we planted some leftovers the next year in early spring. It turned out there was going to be dry spell that year, and we re-watered a couple of times a week for another month.



The bulk of the trees, over 200, were Heart nut (ISMSHU, CW3, SIMCO) from western New York, but we also tried Butternut, Hazelnut, also known as Filbert (Slate), Northern Pecan, Hican (Abbot), Hickory, Paw Paw (Golden), Persimmon (Yates), and hybrid American Chestnut (Douglas). The few Hazelnut, Hican, and Pecan, were bare root stock, and less than a half dozen nuts each were Black Walnut, Butternut, all shared from NYNGA.



Persimmon  
Yates



Results after almost 30 years were better than expected. Most trees exceed 30 feet high and currently need thinning. The spacing was kept low, around 12 feet, in anticipation of higher mortality, and relatively few nut producers. There were some years which produced few flowers, perhaps due to the late Spring frosts, and a couple of years of insect damage. Overall, our mortality losses of the viable seedlings after three

years have been below 15%, with those positions lost being replanted with other species. Only a few more trees have died since then.

The Hazelnuts have not been blighted yet, but only one of three American Chestnut hybrids is alive. Of the two Persimmon and Paw Paws, one each were destroyed by falling deadwood leftover from the tornado. Both remaining trees are fine, but might not ever fruit, lacking an external pollen source. Happily, the field seems to have a supply of insect predators, including wasps, tiger beetles, and some type of Neuroptera (Laced Wing Fly), see images on the web page. The hay was not replanted in the decades that have passed, so other species have infiltrated the field.



The field has been cut up until three years ago and may be left to see what will happen next. Otherwise, if one wanted maximum production, the grass under the drip line would be mowed often to reduce root competition.

## Private Landowner Opportunities/Programs

Presented by Scott Moxham, DEC, Private Land Utilization Program

Summarized by Aaron Gabriel

There are 500,000 private landowners in New York that are responsible for 14 million woodland acres. That is 73% of New York's forested land. Ninety percent of timber harvests occur on privately owned land, and only 25% of those harvests involve a forester. The NY forest industry employs 60,000 people and contributes \$4.6 billion annually to the economy. Private forest owners have an important role in New York's ecosystem and economy.

The NYS DEC has many services and programs to support woodland owners - programs that aim to increase and improve forests and forest health, wildlife, forest products, climate resiliency, and carbon sequestration. Scott Moxham gave an informative presentation on three DEC programs: Forest Stewardship Program, 480a Tax Program, and Regenerate NY.

At the NYS DEC website, Private Forest Management ([https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/private-forest-management#Forest Stewardship Program](https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/private-forest-management#Forest%20Stewardship%20Program)), you will find information on the **Forest Stewardship Program**. This program offers several resources in an initial step to educate landowners about forestry and how to go about managing woodlands. The goal is to have landowners go through three levels of planning. First, a *Forest Practice Plan* is made to focus on the immediate landowner needs and recommended practices. Second, is a *Forest Stewardship Plan*, which identifies landowner objectives, woodland resources, and what is needed to meet the objectives. Third, is the *Forest Management Plan* where an inventory of woodland resources is taken so that informed decisions can be developed into a forest management plan based on landowner objectives. Because forests take long-term management, it is very useful to have a written plan for the landowner and then for others in the years to come.

A free visit from a DEC forester is part of the Forest Stewardship Program. However, there is a very limited number of DEC foresters in each region and they are very busy. So, it may take time to get an appointment. The Cornell Master Forest Owner Program is another way to get a free visit from a knowledgeable person to connect you with resources and help you start managing woodlands (<https://blogs.cornell.edu/ccemfo/>).

The **480a Forest Tax Law Program**, <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/private-forest-management/480a-forest-tax-law>, has been around since 1974 to reduce the property tax burden on landowners of 50 or more contiguous woodland acres. The program's objective is to foster timber development. There are several requirements of the program including having a forest management plan and a 5-year work schedule, as well as working with your tax assessor and DEC to update and renew your plan and enrollment. The tax benefit calculation is on the 480a website above.

There are several changes to 480a beginning March 1, 2026. Enrollment now requires:

- A 20-year forest management plan by a qualified forester rather than a 10-year plan
- A 5-year update to management plans

- 6-month harvest notification
- 6% stumpage tax paid to county
- Enrolled acres must be capable of producing a forest crop within 30 years of enrollment
- Scheduled work in the approved management plan is mandated to be done

You must do your homework to decide if the 480a program fits your objectives.

The purpose of the **Regenerate NY** program (<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/private-forest-management/regenerate-new-york-grant-program>) is to address climate change by improving and increasing our forests. Natural regeneration and the long-term health of New York forests are very poor state-wide. Only the Adirondacks and a few scattered areas have “secure” natural forest regeneration. The culprits are deer (mostly), as well as invasive species, and poor harvesting practices.

Regenerate NY is a cost-share program that provides almost any landowner with financial support for forestry projects that create resilient forests, restore degraded forests, or restore and reforests marginal/transitional lands. A 10% match is required by the applicant and grants are from \$10,000 to \$1,000,000. The current Round 5 is funded at \$5 million. Funded practices include: tree planting, tree thinning, deer exclusions, invasive species removal, and several other forestry treatments.

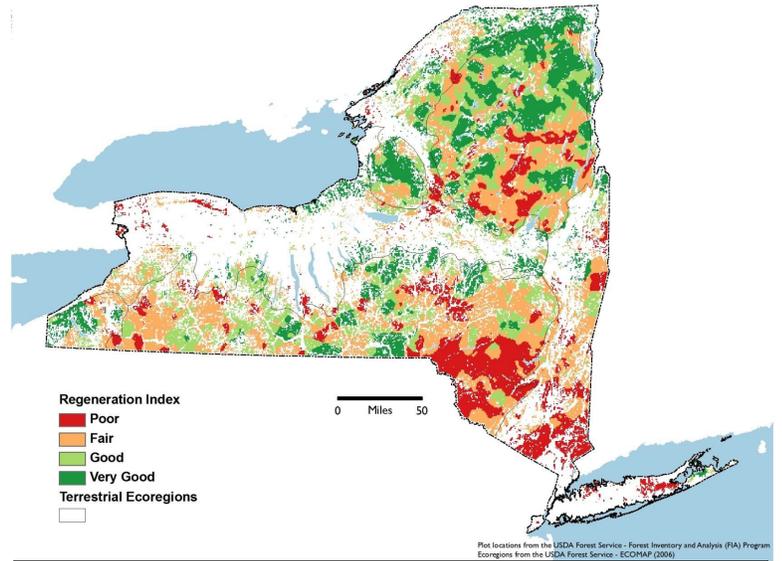


Figure 6. Predicted values for Regeneration Index of desirable timber species in New York State. Regeneration is slightly better for native tree species.

Details and deadlines for Regenerate NY are at the website given above, along with a recorded webinar explaining the program.

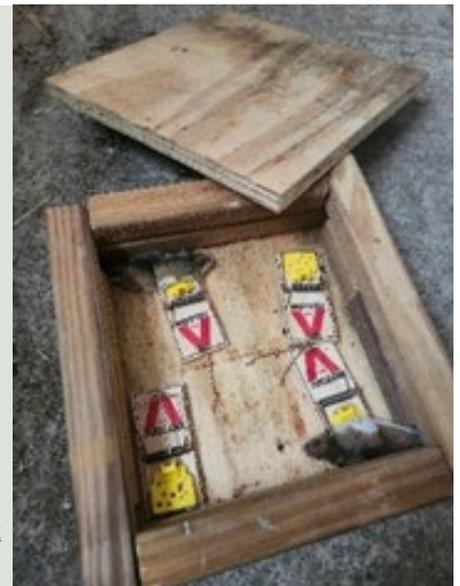
These are just three of several DEC programs that help landowners manage woodlands for their own benefit and for the next generation.

## Members Corner

### “Catch Box” for Mice - Aaron Gabriel

I found a very useful contraption in one of my favorite magazines, Farm Show. It is a “Catch Box” for mice. This is the picture of one that I made with one of several harvests so far. Mice are curious and investigate one of the holes at each corner (about ¾” W x 1 ½” H). Inside at each corner you place a mouse trap that catches them (platform trigger type). There is no need for bait, which makes these especially useful in the summertime outside, where ants eat any bait that you put on a trap. I have used these catch boxes outside near my mushroom logs and inside my barn. I used treated plywood and treated deck balusters (2”x 2”) – about \$17 for wood & traps. You can find the original Farm Show article at:

[https://www.farmshow.com/a\\_article.php?submit\\_search=1&keywords1=%22catch%20box%22%20for%20mice&aid=34906&page\\_num=1&nav\\_previous=&nav\\_next=](https://www.farmshow.com/a_article.php?submit_search=1&keywords1=%22catch%20box%22%20for%20mice&aid=34906&page_num=1&nav_previous=&nav_next=)



## Highlights of the SAC Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting was held on January 24, 2026, at the Cornell Cooperative Extension building in Warrensburg. After the secretary's report, Mary Marchewka gave the **treasurer's report** and led a discussion. The state NYFOA office is offering to help local chapters with treasurer duties by managing the banking tasks. Treasurers of each chapter continue to maintain financial records. The vote was in favor of making this change.

Hugh Canham updated us on **legislative affairs**. The Environmental Protection Fund is allotting \$425 million to be used in the areas of wood product development, Regenerate NY, control and eradication of HWA, support the two state colleges of forestry, community (urban) forests, and land easements and trusts. Forestry Awareness Day is coming up on March 10<sup>th</sup> in Albany. Hugh is looking for volunteers from the NYFOA Chapters to join him to talk to legislators. Three topics will be chosen to discuss with legislators. The NYFOA Legislative committee is advocating for temporary easements. They also responded to the 480a tax program changes (which emphasize timber production) and gave a push for the proposed 480b tax program (which emphasizes multiple uses of woodlands).

We had a brief discussion on NYFOA supporting DMAP permits (Deer Management Assistance Program) for those in the 480a program.

Kurt Edwards of the Events Committee announced our coming events for 2026. **If anyone would like to host a woodswalk or workshop, please contact Kurt** ([edwardsk922@gmail.com](mailto:edwardsk922@gmail.com)).

Our on-going discussion for increasing membership included ideas of using social media; offering discounted new membership coupons; placing an invitation in Farm Bureau newsletters (to be done by Aaron Gabriel); and partnering with local businesses to raise funds and NYFOA awareness (to be investigated by Jim Lieberum). **We need members to take the lead on ideas for increasing membership.** If you have an idea, please coordinate with our chapter officers and contribute your efforts – especially if you want to take the lead using social media for the SAC Chapter.

Jim Lieberum, SWCD Warren County, spoke about the ¼ acre deer exclosure project his office installed at Pack Forest. It has a 12 to 15-year lifespan to show the effects of deer browse. If others are interested in a deer exclosure on their property in Warren County, can contact the SWCD office. Jim also provided information on programs offered through his office: 12 steps for Climate Resilience, Conservation Stewardship Program 2026 Tree and Shrub sale, Community Conservation Grant and Arbor Day.

Brayton Pendell updated us on the \$25 mil project to revitalize equipment and facilities at the DEC Tree Nursery. Phase one is a \$500k, 100-acre deer fence. The nursery loses 20-25% of their seedlings to deer population yearly. The next phase of the project will be irrigation.

We thanked Kristie Edwards for producing our SAC Chapter newsletter for many years. Aaron Gabriel has volunteered to take over starting with the spring issue. **If you have anything you would like to contribute to our newsletter (articles, reports on successful or unsuccessful forestry projects, recipes, nifty forestry ideas, etc), please send them to Aaron** ([adg12@cornell.edu](mailto:adg12@cornell.edu), 838-722-0971).

Officer Nominations/Vote: All were in favor of keeping our three current officers for the coming year: Brayton Pendell - Chairman, Rose Torre - Vice Chairman, Mary Marchewka - Treasurer. Bill Burke has stepped down as secretary. Kristie Edwards has volunteered to cover as secretary for the next year or until someone would like to take the position.

Brayton Pendell gave an update from the NYFOA Re-Branding committee, which voted to do a two-month trial run of changing the name of the Forest Owner *magazine* to "Woodland Steward". The goal of the re-branding is to be more inclusive and increase membership. We discussed the meaning and merits of the wording. Most were not in favor of re-branding.

We had another really good pot-luck lunch and lots of conversation. After lunch, Scott Moxham, DEC - Private Lands Utilization Program, gave a presentation, "DEC Opportunities and Programs for Private Landowners".

### Information for Spring Tree Planting:

NYS DEC website: [resources for tree planting and care](#)

MassWoods Reforestation Guide: <https://masswoods.org/planting>

## 2026 Coming Events.....

### **PACK FOREST Woodswalk**

**Saturday, May 16, 2026**

136 Pack Forest Road,  
Warrensburg, NY

Arrival 9:30 to 10:00am

Walk begins at 10am

Lunch to follow - please bring your own  
bag lunch and beverage

At SUNY ESF's Demonstration Forest in  
Warrensburg we will tour new projects  
recently completed. We should also be  
able to view the aftermath of a controlled  
burn they are planning.

### **Annual Picnic**

**Saturday, October 3, 2026**

Hosts: Jack and Gail Phelan

Washington County

(more information to follow in the July  
Overstory)

### **Fruit Tree/Bush**

#### **Pruning Demonstration**

**Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1 – 3 pm**

Hosted by: Ed and Donna Welch

105 Dankers Road, Johnsburg

Questions call Donna: 518-225-0629 Mike

Basedow Tree Fruit Specialist -

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Directions: Dankers Road is 2.3 miles down  
South Johnsburg Road from its intersection with  
Route 8 in Johnsburg. The house is 1/2 mile  
down Dankers Road on the left. There are no  
other houses on the road.

### ***FYI***

**Spring Tree Sales** check with your county  
Soil and Water Conservation District

**New York Invasive Species Awareness  
Week** June 8 – 14, 2026

[https://www.wnyprism.org/event/national-  
invasive-species-awareness-week-2/](https://www.wnyprism.org/event/national-invasive-species-awareness-week-2/)

**DEC Announces Fifth Round of  
Regenerate NY Forestry  
Cost Share Grants**

[https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases/2026/1/dec-  
announces-fifth-round-of-regenerate-ny-forestry-cost-  
share-grants](https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases/2026/1/dec-announces-fifth-round-of-regenerate-ny-forestry-cost-share-grants)

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)



**NYFOA**

New York Forest Owners Association

**SOUTHEASTERN  
ADIRONDACK CHAPTER**

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