



NYFOA

New York Forest Owners Association

SOUTHEASTERN ADIRONDACK

PREVIEW: Annual SAC Picnic – October 3, 2026

Our annual picnic this year will be hosted by Jack and Gail Phelan at their family property in Salem. The 60 acres was purchased by Jack's family in 1960 and has been a recreational getaway for them ever since. The woodlot is a mix of oaks, maples, cherry, and some nice white pine growing on a gravelly loam soil. The White Creek is nearby - a tributary to the Battenkill. Every 10 to 12 years, they schedule a timber harvest. Another will be scheduled for the near future, since it has been 9 years since the last harvest. We will use the logging trails for our woodswalk before lunch. Be prepared, some of them are a little overgrown. Picnic details are in the Events section of this issue. October is a great time for a woodswalk and a get together. Come and bring a friend.

The Overstory

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Summer 2026

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Christopher Buff

Doreen Kelly

Robert Pickard

ADIRONDACK STUMPAGE

PRICE REPORT

New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation

www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5259.html

JOIN NYFOA at nyfoa.org

Why Am I Here?

By John R. Greenwood

(From the Pack Forest Woodswalk, May 16, 2026)

Whenever I'm fortunate enough to attend a SAC NYFOA Event, at least one person will ask, "Do you own a woodlot?" My response is always the same: "Not really, I'm here because I like the people and I always learn something." The truth is, I'm a friend and former coworker of the current SAC Event Coordinator, Kurt Edwards. Kurt invited me to a woodswalk several years ago, and I've been a member ever since.

As I thought about the question of owning a woodlot, it occurred to me that maybe I should clarify my "not really." I live on a half-acre corner in a residential neighborhood in Wilton with my three Japanese Maples (my favorites), one flowering crabapple named "Snowflake," one tall oak (Red? White?), one white birch (a 1990's NYS Tree Nursery purchase), eight Canadian Hemlocks (my wife's favorites), and fifteen maples of various varieties (one of which is a Grand-Daddy named Oscar).

Kurt and Kristie have been singing the praises of the Charles Lathrop Pack Demonstration Forest since I can remember. Obligations have prevented me from visiting in the past, but that all changed when I cleared my calendar for the May 16, 2026, NYFOA Tour. All I can say is, I'm sure glad I didn't miss this one! I have submitted some pieces about past NYFOA events before, so Kurt's wife

Kristie, asked if I'd be interested in writing about today's tour. Of course, my arms are weak and easily twisted, so here we are.

I took lots of notes and voice recordings at each stop of our tour. It would take a newsletter an inch thick to regurgitate all the information shared. Here's a snapshot version of our four-hour Pack Forest Tour.

Mike Federice was our main tour guide. Mike is the Adirondack Forest Property Manager for SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry, or ESF. He broke down part of his talk into three different avenues of maintaining a healthy forest. The first was "Resistance." This is when you focus on maintaining and improving the species that are currently present. Second was "Resilience." That's when you build a diverse forest with different species, age classes, and sizes that outperform the others. Finally, you have "Transition," where you try to fast-forward to what you might expect your forest to look like 100 years from now based on climate projections.

Next up was Allison McKenna, a Research Support Specialist for the NYS Hemlock Initiative. The only thing that surpassed her extensive knowledge of the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid was her passion for the subject. It gave me hope for the future of any hemlock forest that Alison sets foot in. Hemlock Woolly Adelgids everywhere should beware!

On our next stop, Mike provided a thorough explanation of the hows and whys of various types of selective thinning. We were able to see firsthand the benefits of allowing more sunlight for certain species and, at the same time, providing habitat and protection for certain animals and plants. It always amazes me how much there is to learn about our everyday surroundings.

One stop had everyone literally standing slack-jawed, staring into the sky. It was the historic "Grandmother Tree." The 165-foot-tall white pine was already 139 years old in 1813. Do your own Googling to learn the rest of the story. Visit the Pack Forest to see the legend in person.

Lastly, and after a relaxing lunch at the Pack Forest Headquarters, a line of vehicles convoyed up Rt.#28 to visit two deer exclosures. The information at that stop was presented by Jim Lieberum. Jim is the District Manager of the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation Office. I can't imagine anyone more knowledgeable, or at the same time, more "passionate" about his work. Whether a deer exclosure is on your radar or not, I highly recommend you visit the website: www.warrenswcd.org for more information on everything from deer exclosures to community gardens.

To sum up my simplified review of what turned out to be a wonderful experience—the best advice I can give is to bring a friend, neighbor, coworker, fishing buddy, or better yet, your son or daughter along to the next NYFOA event near you. Pack a nice lunch, some bug spray, your favorite walking stick, grab your car keys, and come along—but don't come alone. We need the next generation to be as excited and passionate about the great outdoors and its future as the members of your local NYFOA Chapter.

Once again, everyone involved in this event knocked it out of the park. The presenters, attendees, and even the weather came together to provide another enjoyable, interesting, informative, and memorable day for me. Having just lost my wife of fifty-one years in March, I was in desperate need of a hug from Mother Nature and a handshake or two from some old and hopefully, new friends. Mission accomplished.

Welcome to the SAC

Neil A Morse, Town of Shushan, Washington County

My wife and I purchased a run-down farm in 2013 as a camp. It has 230 acres, mostly woodlot. One mile from the Vermont border and two miles from the Batten kill. The farm used to belong to the famous Oakie Butcher. Well known in the hunting and trapping world. We moved here permanently in 2018 when I retired. I have since taken up logging. Hard to find a logger willing to take the junk and that's what I spend my days working on. Life is good here in beautiful Camden Valley.

***Articles and contributions to the Overstory are always welcome.
Send to Aaron Gabriel, adg12@cornell.edu***

David Falvo, Town of Caroga, Fulton County

I steward a 40-acre parcel in the southern Adirondacks and I am currently working with the USDA NRSC program to increase wildlife habitat. What I enjoy most about the property is learning how to steward. I've learned so much from the forester that initially evaluated the land, the USDA agents and the NYFOA. The parcel consists of woodlands and wetlands and has an abundance of wildlife. Seeing wildlife thrive from our collective efforts has been very rewarding.

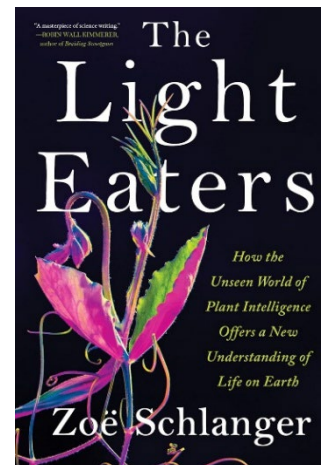
**Christopher Buff**, Town of Ballston Sp, Saratoga County

Our property is located in the Town of Constantia in Oswego County and is just over 1100 acres. It has been our family for 4 generations, having been acquired by my great-grandfather. He started with a few parcels then would purchase adjacent parcels as they became available. We practice sustainable forestry and have used a forester on several occasions to ensure the long-term benefit to our timber. We have many family members who use the property for hunting and fishing and simply recreating in the outdoor fresh air. Generations of family members have very fond memories of time spent in the woods. We have three ponds on the property, the largest of which is about 100 acres and most family members have learned the competency of rowing a boat.

The Light Eaters by Zoe Schlanger

(A book review by Rosalba Torre)

You may remember reading or at least hearing about The Secret Life of Plants published in 1973. It was a best seller about plant behavior and intelligence. It described studies that concluded that plants enjoyed the Beatles and Beethoven but not heavy metal rock; the panicked reaction of trees to the mere sound of a chainsaw; and the ability of houseplants to read the minds of the researchers. Unfortunately, despite its popularity, much of the science could not be reproduced or didn't exist at all. Research into plant behavior came to a grinding halt and grant money for such research dried up. Zoe Schlanger is a science journalist who, tired of the gloom and doom of reporting on climate change, was intrigued by plant behavior. Her book investigates all the current research in plant behavior and intelligence. She has spent time in the labs of all the scientists for a firsthand look at their research, and what they are learning is fascinating. Evidence shows that plants can sense their environment, react to it, and communicate what they learn to other plants and animals near and far.



- A research forest was infested with tent caterpillars for several years, but the caterpillars suddenly began to die. The trees were communicating via airborne chemical messengers, across long distances, allowing the unaffected trees to alter their chemistry making their leaves poisonous to the caterpillar.
- Plants are aware of someone touching them and the sensory information courses throughout the entire plant. Plants can hear the sound of caterpillars munching away on their leaves. They respond by producing chemicals to make their leaves taste bad OR to attract a wasp that will eat the caterpillars.
- Plants regularly interact with animals, and research has revealed several tricks that plants play to lure pollinators. Their actions are carefully timed and vary widely with the circumstances. They go way beyond the passive adaptations in shape and timing with which we are all familiar.

The Light Eaters is full of the myriad ways that plants learn, communicate and respond intelligently; all without a "brain". The research goes on. Schlanger is a master storyteller and really brings the research to life. The science is presented on an academic level that is always accessible to the layman. The Light Eaters is a bestseller that is both enjoyable and educational and keeps us looking forward to what we will learn in the future. It leaves one wondering once again how a tree reacts to the sound of a chainsaw heading its way.

Pruning Demonstration Notes

Mike Basedow, Cornell Cooperative Extension ENYCHP Tree Fruit Specialist

(Thanks to Ed and Donna Welch for hosting the pruning demonstration last March)

Pruning Overgrown Apple and Pear Trees

Early spring (March and early April) is a great time to dormant prune old, overgrown apple and pear trees. Our main goals of pruning these older trees are to:

- Maintain a manageable tree height
- Promote sunlight throughout the canopy to encourage good fruit bud production
- Replace old wood with young, fruitful wood
- Promote good air flow through the trees to reduce disease risk
- Remove dead, diseased and damaged wood

I also like to define the main types of tree limbs when I discuss fruit tree pruning:

- **Leaders** are the main, permanent uprights on an apple and pear tree. Many older trees we see in backyards have 3 to 4 leaders beginning around 4-5 feet up the trunk. This is essentially permanent, vertical, structural wood.
- **Scaffolds** are thick, semi-permanent horizontal limbs emerging from the leaders. These should be evenly dispersed along the leaders and are also considered to be structural wood. They should be larger at the bottom of the tree, and shorter near the top to promote good sunlight exposure through the tree.
- **Laterals** are younger and thinner limbs, ideally between 1-5 years in age. Laterals are where the bulk of the fruit buds are within a productive apple or pear tree. Unlike leaders and scaffolds, laterals are temporary and should be replaced over time to ensure the tree remains full of young, fruitful wood.
- **Spurs** are very short shoots, generally produced on 2 to 5 years old laterals. They typically produce fruit buds where the bulk of apples and pears are produced within a tree.

Many old, overgrown apple trees were planted on seedling rootstocks. These rootstocks are very long lived. Unpruned trees easily grow to heights of 25 to 30 feet, taking much of the fruitful wood out of the reach of our hands.

When pruning these tall old trees, I first like to gradually shorten the height of the leaders so more fruitful wood is in the lower portions of trees. A rule of thumb is to reduce the height of the leaders by about three feet per year. For example, if your unpruned tree is 25 feet tall, reduce the height by three feet over the next three springs to bring the height back to 16 feet. Gradually bringing the height of the tree back will help to limit the excessive regrowth you get from making more dramatic cuts.

When reducing tree height, another way to limit excessive regrowth is to make your cut just above a weak growing horizontal scaffold. Most of the good fruit on apple trees will be produced on horizontal wood. If we cut back to just above a horizontal limb with a good amount of spurs, the fruit should help take some of the energy from the tree, and help limit the regrowth.

In addition to this 3-foot rule, we believe we can remove up to about 30% of the tree canopy during dormant pruning before we risk injuring the tree. Often lowering the height of the tree by three feet gets us close to this limit, so again, reduce tree height slowly over multiple years.

Expect some dramatic regrowth as you reduce tree height. Some of the very upright regrowth the tree will produce in spring can be removed in the summertime, however, be sure to cut these new upright shoots on cool, dry days to limit disease spread from the open pruning wounds.

Once the leader heights are reduced by about three feet, then work lower in the tree, focusing to reduce internal canopy shading. To do this, I recommend thinning out some of the scaffold and lateral branches that remain, cutting them back to their point of origin. Good candidates for limbs to come out include:

- Limbs that are dead, damaged, or visibly diseased
- Limbs that are growing very upright, or drooping below horizontal
- Limbs that are forked, or very complex in their limb structure
- Limbs that are growing straight up right against the main trunk (water sprouts)

To regrow a limb that has gotten too old, leave a short stub of about 3 to 4 inches. The stub will likely have a dormant bud on it, which can form a new, more fruitful shoot in its place. To ensure that you do not get a replacement limb, make the cut flush back to the collar, the small ridge just above the bark layer adjacent to the point of branch removal.

The below photo shows the same tree before (left) and after (right) pruning. The large dead leader facing towards us was removed entirely. The other leaders were reduced in height by about three feet, cutting back just above outward facing horizontal scaffolds.



From there, we removed scaffold and lateral limbs that were either too upright or drooping below horizontal. We also removed any limbs that were pointing back towards the center of the tree to limit the amount of internal shading within the tree.

In the following years, we would annually look to remove another three feet of vertical growth, to ultimately get the height of the tree back to about 16 feet tall. Getting more sunlight into the interior of the tree should allow for the growth of more fruitful laterals lower in the tree canopy.

Pruning Mature Blueberry Bushes

Early spring is also the best time to prune blueberries. The key is to remove one to two whole canes per year. While blueberry plants may live to be over 50 years old, we can keep them productive by regularly removing the oldest canes, so that we never have canes that are over 8 years old. When removing canes, cut the entire cane all the way back to the crown of the bush. Leaving large stubs will produce weaker cane regrowth along the stub, or the dead stubs can serve as disease infection points.

When deciding which canes to remove, focus on removing the older, larger, heavily branched canes. Older canes start to lose their productivity as more leaves are required to support a given amount of fruit. Branched canes also

produce weaker fruiting wood, branches increase shading to the lower portions of the bush. Removing one or two of the largest canes will promote new cane growth.

In addition to removing these older canes, I also look for:

- any winter-injured or broken canes
- canes with disease and insect damage
- canes that are rubbing against another to prevent canker infections
- canes that are interfering with movement through the alley

Ultimately, we want to prune our blueberries so that they have a good mix of cane ages, with no cane being more than eight years old. Aim for a plant with an upright growth habit, yet with a sufficiently open canopy to allow for good light penetration. This annual pruning should help keep your bushes productive for the years to come.

Growing a Wildflower Garden in the Woods: A Guide for Allegany County and the Southern Tier

By Cristian Acosta, Ag. Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension Allegany County

(According to an AI Google search, these plants are also native to our region. – Aaron Gabriel)

There is a particular magic in the woods in early May, when the canopy is still bare and the forest floor erupts in bloom before the trees ever leaf out. Spring ephemerals race the season, finishing their entire above-ground life cycle in the brief window of sunlight between snowmelt and full leaf-out. If you have a wooded lot in Allegany County or somewhere similar, you already own the conditions most flower gardeners spend years trying to replicate. The



work is less about imposing a garden on the woods and more about restoring what belonged there in the first place.

Read the Site First - Woodland gardening rewards observation. Before ordering anything, watch how light, water, and soil behave on your place across a season.

Light is the most important variable. Walk your woods in early April before leaf-out, late May when the canopy closes, and mid-July at peak shade. A spot that gets six hours of April sun and deep July shade is ideal for spring ephemerals. A spot under hemlock that stays dim all year supports a narrower list: mostly ferns, foamflower, and wild ginger.

Moisture matters next. North-facing slopes and bottomlands hold water; south-facing slopes and ridgetops dry out by midsummer. As for soil, the thin layer of leaf duff you might be tempted to rake away is the engine of the whole system. Leave it. Cornell Cooperative Extension offers inexpensive soil tests if you want hard numbers on pH and nutrients.

Plant What Belongs - Match plants to existing conditions rather than amending your way into a different ecosystem. A working palette for our region:

Spring ephemerals: bloodroot, trout lily, Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty, Virginia bluebells, and trillium.

Mid-spring to early summer: wild geranium, wild columbine, foamflower, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and mayapple.

Summer structure: wild ginger, hepatica, black cohosh, and native ferns (Christmas, ostrich, maidenhair, lady, sensitive). Plant in drifts (clusters), not singletons. Let ephemerals carry spring while ferns and longer-lived foliage hold the look through summer.

Source Plants Ethically - Never dig wildflowers from the woods. Trillium can take seven years from seed to first bloom, and wild populations are already pressured. Buy from nurseries that propagate their own stock, reputable native plant nurseries will tell you directly. The Finger Lakes Native Plant Society and regional native plant sales are excellent sources.

Planting - Plant in early spring (April as soon as the ground can be worked) or early fall (September into mid-October). Pull back the leaf litter, dig a hole just big enough for the root ball, backfill, water in, and tuck the litter back around the

crown. No need to amend with potting soil or peat, woodland plants want forest soil. Water through the first growing season, especially in July and August dry spells. After year one, most natives need no supplemental water.

Manage the Real Threats - It isn't winter cold that defeats woodland gardens here. It's deer, invasives, and earthworms. Trillium is candy to deer: fence, repel, or focus first on less-palatable species like ferns, wild ginger, and bloodroot. Garlic mustard is the most insidious invasive in shaded woods; it suppresses the mycorrhizal fungi that natives depend on. Pull it before it sets seed, every spring. European earthworms degrade leaf duff, and a thick, undisturbed leaf layer is the best defense.

The Long View - A woodland garden is not a short-term project. Year one feels modest. By year three, drifts form. By year seven or eight, the woods will look like they were always meant to look that way. It is also one of the most ecologically valuable things you can do with a piece of land.

To read the complete article, including a more detailed plant guide, soil testing information, pictures, and additional resources, visit allegany.cce.cornell.edu/gardening/natives-wild.

NYFOA News and FYI's

NYFOA is searching for a managing editor for our flagship publication, The New York Woodland Steward. If you or someone you know would like to apply, please contact Ed Neuhauser, edward.neuhauser@gmail.com.

The Woodland Stewards Collaborative, is a partnership between NYFOA and the Winnakee Land Trust to provide educational programming. Learn more and sign up for the webinars, <https://nyfoa.org/the-woodland-stewards-collaborative/>

The **National Forests and Grasslands app** is available for download on [Apple store for iOS](#) and [Google Play for Android](#). For the first time the app provides the most complete and accurate collection of Forest Service recreation sites that has ever been made available to the public, along with important planning tools like critical safety alerts, closures, amenity details and more. More information at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/maps/mobile-app>.

2027 Farm Show Forestry Seminars – if you have suggestions for topics, please contact Hugh Canham, cocanham@esf.edu.

2025 Coming Events.....

Annual SAC Picnic

October 3, 2026	Arrive: 9:30 —10:00 am (refreshments available)
Jack and Gail Phelan	Woodswalk— 10:00 am
2490 St Rte 29	Picnic following woodswalk – Hamburgers, hotdogs, beverages
Salem, NY 12865	beverages & paper products will be provided.

Please bring: A salad or food item to share and lawn chairs

Please RSVP to Kurt /Kristie Edwards 518-661-5685 or at edwardsk922@gmail.com by 9/25

Webinars: The Woodland Stewards Collaborative

Birds & Habitat: Forest Management Plans That Help Birds Thrive

July 16, 2026, at 1pm via ZOOM

Conservation Forestry and Your Land, September 10, 2026, at 1pm via ZOOM

Info and registration, <https://www.winnakee.org/upcoming-events/>

Game of Logging Trainings: Agricultural Stewardship Association,

<https://www.agstewardship.org/events/> , (level 3 on Oct. 24th & level 4 on Oct. 25th, 2026)

Cornell Cooperative Extension -Warren County (Dan Carusone, djc69@cornell.edu, 518-668-4881 (level 1 & storm damage Aug. 5th & 6th and Sept. 23rd & 24th, 2026)



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