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# WOODLOT TIPS

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## Winter 2024

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## **President's note:**

This year 2024 marks an important milestone for the Windham Regional Woodland Assoc, this year we celebrate 75 years! Throughout this year we have big things planned, including exploring an updated logo, the revitalization of our website, fresh ideas about new educational programs and other changes which, like New Year's resolutions, promise to keep building and improving upon who we are. As these newsletters are only quarterly snippets of the organization each reader to make sure to visit our website for the latest in programs and events.

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## **Forest Legacies**

Over the summer staff at Vermont's agency of Forest Park's and Recreation planned a trip to Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest. The trip brought opportunities to learn from this region's forest laboratory about the systems and collaborations they have used through the decades to respond to changes in the landscape as well as the opportunity to visit several patches of old growth forest. To give a brief history, the Allegheny National Forest is located on a plateau in western Pennsylvania. This region, unlike Vermont, was neither touched by glaciers nor pasture clearing. Unfortunately, the area didn't avoid the touch of the timber barons, and much like the Adirondacks and the White Mountains, the Plateau was first selectively cut for its most valuable trees and then eventually clearcut to feed the expanding wood chemical industry. Like the even-aged forests that now cover much of Vermont, the assemblage of trees known as the Allegheny hardwoods, famous for their abundance of black cherry sawlogs, is itself the aftermath

forest community left behind from this period of destructive clearing.

Forest management in this region, much like in our own, have faced many. During our visit we toured and came to appreciate several of these periods of challenge and the dedicated forestry professionals that recognized them and rose to the occasion. We toured regions of fenced forest which protect 10's of thousands of acres from deer over browsing, heard about the acid and nitrogen legacies of pre-Clean Air Act impacts from power generation in Ohio and the growing concern of fungal networks that may be the result of decades of near monocultures of black cherry being grown on the landscape. In addition to each of these the area has already lived through Emerald Ash Borer, was just discovering the impacts of Beech Leaf Disease, and was fighting back against Hemlock Wooley Adelgid. It was heartening to hear how across decades forest scientists, managers and landowners have persevered in the face of so many obstacles.

(Continued on next page)

The group visited four regions of old growth forest on the trip. The most famous of these was the Cathedral Forest Natural Area, a region of old growth forest in Cook Forest State Park that was set aside by the barons themselves and whose canopy of white pine dates back 600+ years! The size of the pines in this region of forest are truly awe inspiring, but what caught my attention more is that this uniquely pine dominated canopy is the legacy of a singular event which was by all accounts likely an intentional burn set by the members of the first nations that call this region home.

Reflecting back on this experience as a whole the take home message that embedded the deepest in my mind was that our actions and legacies matter. Be it the 600 year old legacies of a different nation of forest managers, or the legacy of the barons who left would-be profits standing for future generations to admire, or the legacy of the forest scientists and managers who continue to try and work with the forest as the world around us changes the decisions we make on our land during our lifetime will likely far outlast any other memory of our time here.



Cathedral Natural Forest Area  
Cook Forest State Park  
Cooksburg, Pa

**#16 White Pine**  
**a poem by Lynn Levine**

White Pine, tall and strong  
Is a treasured builder's wood.  
Its long, straight grain  
Easily carved,  
Resists rot,  
And grows to 250 feet  
Towering over the forest,  
The top of the tree line.  
White Pine's Latin name is *Pinus Strobes*  
Which means pinecone.  
It has two spirals,  
which are a Fibonacci sequence  
Pine Cones are golden and follow the  
GOLDEN RULE

## How Old Is My Forest? Old USGS Maps May Give a Clue

by Diana Todd

You've probably heard the statistic that 80% of Vermont was open land back in the 1800's. If you've found any stone walls in your woods, you can be pretty sure that your forest was once part of that 80%, since stone walls were typically built around the perimeters of agricultural fields like mowings or pastures. When agricultural use stopped, the forest eventually grew back.

When did that happen for your forest? If it was one of the farms that held on into the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, you might find useful information in historic USGS maps.

The USGS started creating contour maps of the entire country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The series commonly called quadrangles gives the finest level of detail. In Vermont, these 1:62,500 scale maps were first created in the 1890's. New editions were published in the 1930's and 1950's. Images of these maps can be accessed for free at the USGS website. The modern digitally-created maps of the 1980's and 2010's can be accessed at the same site. Additional maps, drawn at 1:125,000 and thus with less detail, are also available. Here's how to find them:

Go to the website: <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/national-geospatial-program/historical-topographic-maps-preserving-past>

That's a lot of typing! Here's how to get there without needing to type in the whole address.

- in your web browser, search for "historic topo maps"
  - In the results list, don't click on the commercial enterprises that want to sell you the maps. The maps are available for free! Look for a listing in the results that is from the United States Geographical Survey. The heading in the results list might be **"Historical Topographic Maps – Preserving the Past"**
  - Click on that.
- The page that opens probably will have box at the top saying "Explore Historical USGS Topographic Maps"
  - Click on the button that says "Download Now"
  - If that header/big box says something other than "Explore Historical . . . ", you can just wait – it cycles through three different options. Wait for the historical option to come up and then click the Download Now button.
- A new page opens with a map of entire US.
  - The side bar on the right is for navigating and for selecting maps.
    - You can type in a location, or type in a quadrangle name and the map will auto-zoom to that location.
    - Or scroll to zoom in to your area of interest and click to mark that spot.
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- The sidebar will refresh and list all the maps that are available for the area, oldest first.
  - In the list, click on the historic map you are interested in. Options will appear.
    - Show – click this icon and you see the image of the map immediately. You can zoom and pan and look around.
    - Or download the map to your computer by clicking on button for format you want: jpeg, kmz, GeoTiff, or GeoPDF.

What information might you glean from these maps? The maps from the 1890's do not differentiate between forested and agricultural land, but they do show buildings. In rural areas, each farm or homestead is shown as a tiny black square. The maps did not show additional squares for barns or outbuildings, so you won't know which buildings were standing, but you'll at least be able to see if there was an active household there at the time. I don't know what the exact criteria were for mapping buildings, but it seems as though abandoned buildings in severe disrepair were not mapped. All roads are shown using the same symbol, so there's not much information about how heavily traveled or how well maintained specific roads were.

The 1930's series of maps was issued as an overprint of the 1890's series. The most significant change in the maps involved the depiction of the road surface. Nothing was paved in the 1890's (other than maybe cobbled streets in urban areas). By the 1930's, the advent of the automobile brought with it new paving techniques. Paved roads are shown with red overprint in the 1930's map series.

The 1950's series of quadrangles was the first one to be based on aerial photographs. This is the series that will give you information about your forest. Forested land was shown in green, and open land was shown in white. (Urban areas were shown with a transparent pink overlay.) There is a 1940's era map also available, at a less detailed scale, that also uses the green/white symbolism for land cover, but it doesn't show all the minor roads.

The 1950's series shows more different symbols for roads than was used in the 1930's series. You can see that some roads have been abandoned and are now considered just trails, shown as a single dashed line. Many farms are now shown with a single black square (the house) and several hollow squares (outbuildings).

Comparing the 1980's versions of the quadrangles to the 1950's series, it is easy to pick out areas where open land decreased in SE Vermont in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the SE corner of what is now the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area in Marlboro was still open land in the 1950's. Today it is forested.

Looking at old maps, at their depictions buildings, roads, and land cover, what can you learn about your forest?

## Soaking it in with Forest Bathing

By Matt Stinchfield

Maybe you've heard the term 'forest bathing.' Admittedly, my first response is, "Thanks, but I prefer a shower." In case you're wondering, yes, you keep your clothes on.

We get the term forest bathing from the Japanese *shinrin-yoku*, which might be better transcribed as 'forest therapy' or 'taking in the forest atmosphere.' However you define it, forest bathing is all about listening, sensing, and letting go in the forest.

The idea behind the practice is timeless. We have all done it to some degree, at one time or another. But forest bathing has come to mean a certain kind of contemplative walk involving specific actions, such as invitations, note writing, meditation, and focus on individual senses.

The forest bathing movement came onto the scene two decades after Timothy Leary urged us to "Turn on, tune in, and drop out" and 140 years since Thoreau advised us to "Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth."

The term *shinrin-yoku* was coined only in 1982, when the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries began promoting it as a way of combating stress, anxiety, and job burnout in competitive, technology-rich urban areas. In Japan, you can take a guided tour meandering through very ancient, protected forests. The guide might measure your blood pressure, heart rate, and salivary enzyme levels before and after. This provides physical evidence that your cortisol levels have declined. That might not work if you encounter a bear or a hornet's nest, but most of the time the results

demonstrate your improved relaxation. Numerous studies have shown short- and long-term positive changes in physiological and emotional wellness markers.

What is most important in forest bathing is the attention given to being present, not trying to get to a destination, finding a certain thing, or doing anything specific. Amos Clifford, author and founder of the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy (ANFT), says forest bathing "is about here, not there." One puts all of their intention into the idea that you engage all of your senses while doing nothing in particular. You listen to the brook, smell the dried leaves, touch the tree bark, and maybe even hug the tree. I'm not making fun when I say your goal is to be one with the woods.



Forest bathing is not a hike and barely can be described as a walk. A typical two to three-hour *shinrin-yoku* might take you no more than a quarter of a mile. Source: [TheForestTherapySchool.com](http://TheForestTherapySchool.com)

### **The Forest Therapy Industry**

You may be wondering, do we really need a certified guide to take a walk in the woods? Of course not. But those in the field acknowledge that some sort of certification is required, at least for those walks being conducted by licensed health care or wellness experts. Where

one's health insurance allows for preventative medicine therapies, forest bathing from a certified instructor might be covered.

Throughout the world, the trend has been lauded as the latest wellness trend, and wherever there is a wellness trend, monetizing it soon follows. In 2018, ANFT had certified 360 guides. Five years later, they have over 2,400. And that is just one guide training outfit.

Trained guides do offer a special kind of experience with nature that combines a number of different wellness practices. Methods often used in forest bathing include:

- Invitations to tune into the sounds, sights, and smells of the forest
- Unplugging from all telephones, smart watches, drones, etc.
- Guided breathing and mindfulness exercises
- Prompts for self-reflection or journaling
- Socialization with group breakouts, or an opening or closing ceremony

In many countries, including in the United States, guides will tout their ANFT *Certified Forest Therapy Guide* credentials. You would advertise, too, after spending between four and five grand on 200 hours of online learning, a four-day immersion field camp, wilderness first aid certification, and other expenses. Not surprisingly, many of the people seeking this sort of certification are in the wellness business, namely doctors, psychologists, addiction specialists, and yoga instructors.

Certifications come in more affordable shapes and sizes, ranging from an online certification from the Swiss company Treeming.org for \$300 to The Forest Therapy School (FTS) based out of Connecticut at \$1,850. If you are looking for a particular nuance in your forest experience, talk to the practitioner beforehand and ask how she or he runs their particular happenings.

Some countries have adapted forest bathing programs to suit their landscape and indigenous heritage. In Kenya, Samburu native guides offer a different kind of safari, one which stops to smell the wild orchids and listen to endangered monkeys. In New Zealand, Māori guides will show you the largest revered kauri trees in the world.



Forest Bathing may include an opening or closing ceremony to express gratitude to the forest. Source: [TheForestTherapySchool.com](http://TheForestTherapySchool.com)

The Kripalu Center, nearby in Massachusetts, offers a course that looks a lot like modern mindfulness with a bit of naturalist interpretation thrown in. Kripalu's program includes fundamentals of shinrin-yoku, then adds training on group facilitation and primitive fire building, or "birthing fire," as they call it. A Level 1 certificate from Kripalu involves attending a 10-day retreat in Stockbridge. With dormitory accommodations you will spend about \$2,500.

More in touch with Native American reverence for the land, the Wildcraft Forest School in British Columbia offers *yasei shinrin yoku*, or "wild forest bathing." Metaphysical subjects that stand out in their curriculum include: intuition building, ancestral relationships, plant spirit guides, and biodiversity shadow work.

Their Practitioner program begins with a 12-part online program followed by a 5-day retreat and practicum in British Columbia and will run less than \$1,500.

### **Try it for Yourself**

A quick survey of forest therapy guides in the Northeast indicates that most are located close to urban centers such as Burlington, Portland, Boston, Hartford and Long Island. Expect to pay between \$30 to \$50 for a two-hour forest experience, depending on the guide and the number of people in the group. Practitioners may also personalize private sessions or offer longer experiences.

Closer to home, Brattleboro does have one forest therapy practitioner we know of. Amanda Kenyon, offers forest immersion walks, forest yoga, and other opportunities through her business Landkind Guide (<https://landkindguide.com/>). Amanda is an experienced worldwide hiker with an FTS certificate and partnerships she has built with the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, the Scott Farm, and others.



Amanda started her business after realizing her driving interests were in nature, mindfulness, and movement. The Venn diagram for these subjects landed squarely on forest bathing, though she admits the term is problematic. She began to attend excursions offered by various guides and in the summer of 2022 she attended field camp in Tennessee and completed her online study for a certificate from TFS.

In her forest therapy experiences, Amanda emphasizes a mindfulness approach. She prefers not to overly engage the conscious mind with naturalist interpretations or other cognitive activities. She finishes her walks with a pleasing and surprising ending that depends on the day. We won't be a spoiler on this account.

She says, "They're called walks, and we walk some in the winter to keep warm, but we walk less than a mile." It seems, in forest bathing, the point is to soak in the ambience of the forest with all your senses. And she adds, "not just the five senses, but imagination and wonder."

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If you have not renewed your 2023-2024 membership and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please renew soon. You can renew ( and contribute to The Scholarship Fund and The Halsey Hicks Education Fund) online at: <http://windhamwoodlands.org/>



## **Beech Leaf Disease Found in Vermont**

By: Savannah Ferriera, Forest Health Specialist  
FPR

Beech leaf disease (BLD), caused by the invasive nematode *Litylenchus crenatae mccannii*, has been confirmed for the first time in Vermont in 2023. After receiving a VTinvasives report of potential BLD in southeastern Vermont, staff from the Forest Health program of the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR), collected symptomatic leaves from American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) saplings. Samples were sent to the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service for DNA confirmation in early October 2023, and BLD has now been officially confirmed in the towns of Vernon and Dummerston which are both located in Windham County. This pest has currently been reported in 14 states, and Ontario, Canada. The most recent reports are in Vermont (2023), Maryland (2023), New Hampshire (2022), Maine (2021), Massachusetts (2020) and Rhode Island (2020).

The causal agent of BLD is an invasive nematode native to Japan that affects all native and ornamental beech species. Beech leaves affected by BLD will have symptoms of a thick striping pattern between leaf veins, which sometimes coincides with chlorosis (yellowing) and/or leaf curling. Symptoms appear immediately at bud-break and are most easily seen by looking up into the canopy from below. In severely symptomatic leaves, the striping area has been observed as slightly raised and thicker than normal tissue, which will lead to leaf deformation, premature leaf-drop, and dieback. In younger trees, symptom progression can be rapid which can lead to high mortality of saplings and understory beech.

At this time it is unknown how BLD is moving across the state. Staff from FPR will be looking for additional signs and symptoms of BLD throughout the 2024 growing season to better understand the extent of BLD in Vermont. For more information on BLD, or to report a sighting, please visit [VTinvasives.org](https://vtinvasives.org).



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## **Winter 2024**

### **Mission of Windham Regional Woodlands Association**

WRWA is a non-profit association of woodland owners and managers, members of the wood products industry, and other interested parties in the Windham County Region who advocate both sustainable management practices and the enjoyment of forests and their ecosystems. In support of these ends, WRWA offers educational opportunities for all age groups. Areas of interest include: biodiversity; clean air and water; cultural and historic resources; fair and equitable taxation of woodland; forest products; recreation; scenic beauty; and wildlife habitat. We recognize that these concepts are continually evolving and therefore will strive to consider the most current thinking and values regarding them.