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WOODLOT TIPS



Photo: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

WINTER 2015

Programs

Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m. — Annual Sugarhouse Tour

[From the Franklins] “The Franklin Farm in Guilford, Vt., is a diversified organic dairy farm made up of 276 acres, most of which are woodland. Many factors determine the flavor and quality of pure maple syrup. The distinct flavor of our syrup originates in the fertile limestone based soils of our woodlands. All summer long the maple trees produce sugar through photosynthesis.

Early in the spring we harvest a fraction of the sweet sap produced by our maples. In February the whole family, and some very good friends, head to the woods to tap the trees and ready the sap lines. We tap all of our trees with small taps called health spouts. We set out around 2,600 of these. All of the sap flows down the hill through these lines and is collected in tanks outside the sugarhouse.

This year the fresh sap will be put into our new Vortex 4' x 12' arch with Revolution pans. This evaporator is fueled using wood harvested here on the farm. It is good to have at least two people in the sugarcabin—the fireman, who feeds the fire every few minutes, and the sugarmaker who monitors the workings of the pan as the sap travels through it on its way to being syrup.

Making high quality maple syrup takes sugarmakers that know and love what they are doing and are incredibly dedicated. Here at the Franklin Farm, David and the boys, with the help of some really good, maple syrup-crazed friends and relatives, do what it takes to produce our syrup. Year after year people tell us that it is the best maple syrup they have ever tasted. We hope you think so, too.

You can sample the syrup that's being made that day, and the aroma of maple is everywhere. The atmosphere is upbeat and jolly. There really isn't anything quite like anywhere. Early spring in the Vermont countryside—check it out, it's contagious.

Directions: I-91 to exit 1. Go **SOUTH** on Rte. 5

RIGHT onto Guilford Center Rd. (Just after Guilford Country Store)

LEFT onto Weatherhead Hollow Rd. (about 1.75 miles from Rt. 5).

Travel about 5 miles **SOUTH** on Weatherhead Hollow. Farm is on the right.

Continue past farm and take a **RIGHT** on Packer Corners Rd. Sugarhouse is straight ahead.

Friday, March 27, 3 – 5 p.m. — Management/Pruning of Ornamental Sugar Maples

Newfane Common, in front of the Windham County Courthouse

Join County Forester Bill Guenther and Certified Arborist Kevin Shrader as they present a workshop on the historic Newfane Green. Bill will give an overview of the ornamental tree management program he started about 15 years ago on what is arguably Vermont's most scenic Common. He is dealing with some very old trees, some pretty young trees, and a few in middle age. They all have their own needs, which vary considerably. Kevin and Bill will discuss the vertical mulching project that included some special additives, and they'll also cover tree planting techniques. The primary emphasis of the afternoon will be on pruning the young Green Mountain Sugar Maples. Proper pruning is essential to good ornamental tree health. Different pruning tools will be discussed followed by an active demonstration. We'll even let folks make a few of the pruning cuts.

Directions: From Brattleboro, go 12 miles north on Route 30 to Newfane Village. The courthouse is on the left as you enter the center of the Village.

Saturday, March 28, 9:30 a.m. — Somerset Old Growth Forest Tour

County Forester Bill Guenther will lead a tour of a Somerset woodlot in what we believe to be a stand of old growth that consists mostly of yellow birch. This 60-acre property was a gift to Leland & Gray High School many years ago. About 12–15 acres of this property are stocked with the big birches, the remainder in spruce/fir and beaver flowage. **We will offer this trip only to WRWA members to keep the numbers manageable, unless we are not fully subscribed. I would like to limit the group size to 12. Please contact me by March 15. Then, if there are slots left, I can get a notice to the media.**

We will meet in West Brattleboro at 9:30 a.m. to carpool out together as parking can be very limited out there in the winter. **You will need to call Bill Guenther at 257-7967 X 305 to save your places and get directions to the specific meeting place.**

We will travel 1.5 miles up the Old County Road to the western edge of the property, then bushwhack east out to the old growth. I recommend that people bring both skis and snowshoes:

skis for the road and snowshoes for the bushwhack woods where brush complicates movement on skis. So take your pick, but I'll probably bring both.

At about lunchtime, we'll stop at the school's campsite and have a picnic lunch. It will be a nice warm up if you also bring a hot thermos of your favorite beverage. After lunch we'll head out into the birch stand and look at these magnificent specimens; many are well over 3 feet in diameter.

We hope to conclude our day by about 3 p.m. Keep in mind that Somerset is the icebox of Windham County, and even though the trip will technically take place in spring, we could easily have some pretty severe winter conditions, so dress warmly and in layers. We want to ensure a safe and enjoyable day for everyone.

Remember: if you're interested, you need to call Bill Guenther at 257-7967 X 305 to set the meeting place and to make sure you've got the right gear. This trip is moderate to somewhat strenuous, and we'll be a long way from anywhere. I also need to confirm that the private road up to the dam has been plowed. Adverse road conditions could cause us to cancel. Spring comes very late out there!

Save the Date! It is never too early to mark the Strolling of the Heifers on your calendars. This year it is June 6, and WRWA will once again be there with a display.

“About My Woods” — a New Tool for Landowners

By Sam Schneski

The About My Woods app and website are now available to landowners in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. Developed to help family forest landowners learn more about their land and connect to professionals who can help them, About My Woods is a great way to connect with the information that landowners need. You can download the free app for Android or iPhone from the following URL: <http://www.aboutmywoods.org/> The site also allows users to browse the app on line.

One of the unique features of the app is that it enables landowners to pinpoint a spot on the map — either where they are located or any other spot in the region — and access maps and information

specific to that location. With complete coverage of the four-state region, the maps include soils, land cover type, watershed, and satellite views, giving users instant mobile access to information specific to individual parcels and locations.

In addition to displaying maps, the About My Woods app helps landowners find local professionals, including state forestry educators, landowner organizations, Tree Farm committees, and land trusts active in the region. Landowners can also use the app to identify common wildlife, trees, wildflowers, and invasive plants and insects. The high-quality photos, coupled with in-depth descriptions, provide users with an indispensable tool for understanding their woods.

An Announcement — One more time!

The Woodland Owners Association is now the Windham Regional Woodlands Association (WRWA). The mission statement, which appears at the end of every issue of *Woodlot Tips*, already refers to an association of “...interested parties in the Windham County region who advocate both

sustainable management practices and the enjoyment of forests and their ecosystems.” The new name frees the organization from the misconception that only owners of woodland can be members. Invite your friends to join and enjoy our upcoming programs!

Remembering Esther Falk

Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester

'Twas a Sad Day When the Butternut Matriarch of Windham County Left Us

Past WOA President Charlie Richardson recently contacted me with news that deeply saddened me: Esther Falk of Dummerston had passed away. Her car got stuck and she tried to walk home and suffered a heart attack just above her home. Any of you who have been on the Big Tree Tour in recent years knew Esther. Her property, one of the prettiest in Windham County, has the state's second largest butternut tree.

Esther was a very young 94 when we lost her and was as sharp as a tack. She loved her BIG tree and was a generous, gracious hostess. When we stopped at her place, she would proudly show off her collection of butternuts, usually making us a butternut cake or muffins — always with REAL whipped cream — and she even had a special butternut nutcracker! She was a fascinating woman who was so engaged with the world and always put others before herself.

During the tour five years ago, I mentioned how her multi-stemmed, open grown tree could benefit from having cabling installed to help ward off structural failure. When asked what the cables do, I replied, "They would help keep the tree together." Two weeks later, for her 89th birthday, a couple of tour participants who knew Esther well put up a thousand dollars to have the cabling of her beloved tree done. I was sworn to secrecy as to who the donors were. On a pretty fall day in December 2010, Godfrey Renaud's crew put six cables in the tree that will stand as a remembrance to its keeper, whose loss we are mourning.

Esther's dear friend Connie Woodberry, from East Dummerston, wrote a beautiful piece about Esther that she has kindly allowed me to share:

Dear Friends:

With a very sad heart I am writing to tell you that Esther Falk died yesterday. I believe she died peacefully. She was on her beloved land. I had seen her Thursday afternoon and Friday lunchtime. She was in good spirits and as always, was full of questions and treats for us.

We live in a wonderful community that allowed her to have the quality of life she so wanted.

We will miss her unconditional welcome at her door, her quick wit, always inquisitive, intelligent, and open mind, not to mention the scones, the almond rusks, the egg custard with fresh nutmeg on top, root beer floats, fresh garden vegetables, flowers, and mango ice cream. She shared her life and her bounty with all of us, including the people she was in contact with each day, at the post office, the co-op, the town office, the car garage, the doctor's office, Lotus Graphics, wherever she went.

Esther loved her life and treasured each tree, deer, woodpecker, turkey, bush, flower, sunset, snowfall, and blue sky. She lived in the present, enjoyed the small pleasures of life, and welcomed us to enjoy it with her.

Grateful for and inspired by her life, we will miss her.

Connie

Scholarship gift to honor Esther Falk — A WRWA member has offered to fund a 2015-2016 scholarship in Esther Falk's memory, and the trustees encourage other members who knew Mrs. Falk to donate as a tribute to this remarkable lady. She was always interested in education, and once, during a tour, handed out a report on the butternut canker disease prepared by a Putney School student.

As Bill Guenther said: What a great way to continue Esther's legacy!

President's Column

by Sam Rowley

Greetings, and thank you for being a member of the Windham Regional Woodlands Association (WRWA). I am excited to continue spreading the news about the name change. This new name is intended to not only appeal to people who own woodlands, but also to people who enjoy and value woodlands for the beauty, wildlife and resources they offer. Rest assured we are the same organization. We felt we needed to evolve just as our woodlands do when challenged with new obstacles of the day.

What else is new? I am the new president, Sam Rowley, moving up from vice president. I am a horticulture teacher at the Windham Regional Career Center in Brattleboro. I interact with and teach high school students all about plants and how we rely and interact with them in our lives. I am happy to take the job of president to work diligently with the trustees to bring members insightful, interesting programs and a great newsletter.

Winter is currently in full force. The inevitable extra long season we endure here in Vermont. So many claim these cold months are all dark and dreary. Personally I enjoy the winter thoroughly. Birds visit feeders readily and with all the bears asleep, beehives and trashcans are safe. When venturing out in the cold, the winter opens the woodlands and allows better access, clear views, and a sense of serenity. With a nice blanket of snow, traveling in the woods can be easier than in the summer. You can easily snowshoe over and through debris, thickets, buckthorn and Japanese

barberry. The icing on the cake is I haven't found a tick crawling on me in months! However you enjoy woodlands don't neglect them during the winter, it is truly special time to experience them.

The winter months are also crucial to Vermont economically. Snow and weekends bring a torrent of visitors who come to experience the outdoors. These visitors recreate in our woodlands, on the side of ski slopes or cruising on snowmobile trails. These two winter sports, among others, rely heavily on sound woodland management. As important as our visitors are to our economic vitality, many travel from states where invasive pests are strongly entrenched. With our woodlands threatened by these pests we need to be educators and diplomatically remind people who visit to not bring firewood or other plant material along.

The days are slowly gaining sunlight but the temperature can still hit annual lows. As uncomfortable as low temperatures can be, remember they can help fight woodland pests. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a forest pest attacking hemlocks, has limited cold tolerance and suffers higher mortality when exposed to cold temperatures. The next time it gets deep into the negatives, think positively about the fight against this forest pest. The weather will change before we know it and the woods will be filled with buckets and tubing to channel sap and usher in the next season of mud. Enjoy the winter while you can, be safe, and thanks for supporting the Windham Regional Woodlands Association.

Forest Health Highlights in 2014

By Bill Guenther, County Forester

*Excerpts taken from Forest, Parks & Recreation
"Forest Health Highlights."*

Last year's long winter left us with deep snow later in the season as well as the coldest March on record. This was both good and bad. The good part was that the late season's cold was most detrimental to Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), and in our sample plots we recorded mortality rates of 97.8 to 99.6 percent. However, the cold weather, with lots of wind, did cause quite a bit of winter

injury to many of the conifers that hold their leaves in the winter and are subject to desiccation.

Low rates of precipitation in August and September caused some early leaf fall, but those crystal clear days and cool nights in September also led to some of the most spectacular foliage in recent memory.

We saw very low numbers of the most damaging hardwood insects and disease, especially the foliar

disease anthracnose. There was a big outbreak of Beech Blight Aphid, also known as the “Boogie-Woogie Aphid.” If you Google this name, you’ll see some very neat YouTube videos that show the hyperactivity of these insects when they are disturbed! While all of that wooly white covering can look pretty bad, these insects are not highly detrimental to the beech tree.

White pine is a hugely important resource of the Windham Region’s forests. For the last five years we have seen substantial amounts of white pine needle damage, caused by three different fungi. The white pine needle blights usually start appearing right around Memorial Day. Typically you first notice a golden hue to the previous year’s needles, with the damage being worse the lower you go on the tree. This is due to higher moisture levels near the base of the tree that allow fungi to thrive. After several weeks, these needles fall off, leaving the crown looking quite thin. Research has shown that the heaviest damage occurs on the same trees from year to year. Since the crown is the tree’s food factory, any depletion of live leaves (in this case needles) causes a drop in overall food production in the tree. A healthy white pine can handle a couple of years of defoliation with no major problems. But if you have multiple years of needle blight *and* add some other stressors, such as turpentine beetles, Caliciopsis canker, or other abiotic challenges, this can cause decline and mortality. We have noticed that damage levels vary considerably from tree to tree within the same stand.

Red Pine Decline has been observed throughout Vermont. At this point we are not sure if this is due to a pest or disease. One of the likely causal agents is Brown Spot Needle Blight, one of the

three fungi causing white pine needle blight. Throughout our region, especially along I-91, many areas of planted red pine are exhibiting signs of severe decline with trees having thin crowns. Research on this problem is currently being done by our neighbors at UNH.

While the cold weather helped keep HWA levels lower, we saw its infestation range expand. This pest has now been found in 15 out of the 23 towns in Windham County and for the first time was discovered in Windsor County, in the town of Springfield. The hemlocks now confront another new insect problem, as the Elongate Hemlock Scale was discovered this year in Windham County. Several sites in Brattleboro and Guilford were detected in both forest and ornamental hemlocks. Elongate Hemlock Scale has a reputation of teaming up with HWA to cause more severe damage. The scale can be observed on the underside of the needle, where an oval structure that is either yellowish to orange brown (female) or white (male) is found. We’ll have more on this insect in a later issue.

The best news coming out of 2014 is that Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has NOT been found in Vermont. We remain ever diligent in being on the lookout for this devastating pest. Our neighbors in the Granite State have seen their infestations grow in both geographic area and number of infestations within the original infested zones. There are now three infested counties in New Hampshire.

In conclusion, 2014 was a decent year for our forests, with lower levels of health problems than some years past. We’ll be watching carefully to see what 2015 brings.

Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife.

More than 600 Vermont woodland owners, including a number of WRWA members, are graduates of a three-day training program conducted by Vermont Coverts. The course includes classroom instruction and fieldwork led by natural resource professionals, foresters, and wildlife biologists. Subjects covered include forest management and timber harvest planning, forest ecology, silviculture, wildlife habitat requirements, and an introduction to forest and wildlife policy issues.

Two training classes are scheduled for 2015: May 15-17 at Northwoods Stewardship Center, East Charleston, Vermont, and September 11-13 at the Farm and Wilderness Camp, Mount Holly. Lodging, food and educational materials are provided. A \$100 deposit, refundable on request at the completion of training, is required to hold the space.

Call or e-mail Lisa Sausville, Executive Director, for additional information or an application form: Lisa@vtcoverts.org, or 802-877-2777.

The Putney Mountain Association and WRWA share many of the same concerns about forest health, management of invasives, and the need for public outreach and participation in our programs. Dan Healey is a board member of both organizations and persuaded Claire Wilson to share her story of the PMA's ongoing work to control buckthorn on the mountaintop to preserve the outstanding views both east and west from the summit.

SHEEP AND GOATS ON PUTNEY MOUNTAIN

By Claire Wilson, Putney Mountain Association

In late September a flock of 38 sheep, accompanied by shepherds David, Yesenia, Marion, Sam, Danielle and Johnnie, border collies Joni and Cookie, and the Maremma guard dog Phantom, walked more than seven miles, from David Major's Vermont Shepherd farm in Westminster West to Putney Mountain. Once arrived, the sheep quickly set themselves on a diet of glossy buckthorn. In short order, the sheep demolished its last-of-the-season growth.

Until the 1940s the top of Putney Mountain was regularly used by local dairy farmers as a summer pasture for their young stock. When the Putney Mountain Association (PMA) took ownership of the land in 1947, much of the ridgeline was essentially open, with clear views west to the Green Mountains and east to Monadnock.

As has happened all over Vermont, when livestock moved out the forest moved in. But the bare ledges of the summit were inhospitable to seedlings; those that took hold were easily controlled by lopping and pruning, and hayscented fern established itself in the hollows.

Then came glossy buckthorn, *Frangula alnus*, the invasive that plagues our forests in southeastern Vermont. The Vermont invasives website describes buckthorn as "an aggressive invader that can form dense thickets which shade and displace native understory plants, shrubs and tree seedlings." Left to its own devices on Putney Mountain's summit, it would grow twenty or thirty feet high, blocking the prized vistas, and blocking sight lines for dedicated hawk watchers who monitor the hawk migration each autumn. In addition, as buckthorn displaces native plants, habitat for native wildlife is threatened. For more information on buckthorn:

<http://www.vtinvasives.org/invasiders/glossy-buckthorn>

For many years, PMA members attempted to keep buckthorn under control by cutting it back once a year. This only seemed to serve as pruning, encouraging vigorous re-growth, and the develop-

ment of deeply entrenched roots. Cutting three times a year had been recommended, but the extent of infestation was more than volunteers could handle.

Many Putney Mountain Association board meetings have included thoughtful discussion of the buckthorn problem. Finally a decision was made to use glyphosate, a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide, as a foliar spray on a small test patch. For more information on glyphosate: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Glyphosate>

At the same time, investigations began into the possibility of using grazing animals. Many websites depict present-day use of goats for clearing invasives, both on agricultural land and in cities — San Francisco, Cleveland and Detroit to name a few. Grants were applied for, and funds for the grazing alternative were awarded to PMA by the New England Grassroots Environment Fund, Vermont Grass Farmers Association, and The AnJeL Advised Fund of RSF Social Finance.

With sufficient funds for two visits by the Goat Girls of Amherst, Mass., in late May fifteen goats and two herders equipped with hundreds of feet of solar powered electric fencing were welcomed to the Putney Mountain summit, and the goats began to chomp.

It was almost miraculous to watch the goats devouring buckthorn leaves, and astonishing to see how quickly new leaves sprouted. Visitors to the summit were full of questions, finding the grazing project a source of great interest.

A second two-week session, with the goats covering the same area, began in late July. Again there was re-growth of leaves, though a bit less vigorous.

With insufficient funds for a desired third visit from The Goat Girls, the question became how to proceed. Was there a local herd of goats that could be employed? None was found, but in a casual conversation with David Major, producer of prize-winning Vermont Shepherd cheeses, it was

learned that sheep control buckthorn on his farm. A flock of 38 ewes was about to be dried off from the milking parlor and could be made available.

This local source of grazing animals proved affordable, and the sheep proved equal to the task. With the increased number of animals and their stay of almost three weeks, the sheep were able to cover the area grazed by the goats, and quite a bit more. To see sheep, shepherds and dogs leaving the mountain October 14th, watch the film made by Greg McAllister for Brattleboro Community TV at www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7cIDGa_u-Y.

With just one summer of grazing, buckthorn has been significantly impacted, and the area is already more accessible for people and animals. However, buckthorn has not been eradicated from the Putney Mountain summit. Leaf-out next spring will indicate what degree of progress has been made. Our hope is to be able to continue this method of control.

In any case, after nearly seventy years, grazing animals returned to the summit of Putney Mountain, and kept it clear and open for the summer of 2014.

That Witchy Wood

By Carol R. Morrison, WTWA Clerk

Black locust trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) are odd. Maple trees reach graciously toward the sky. If they spoke, they might be saying, “Hallelujah!” Willows sway elegantly in the breeze. Perhaps they are whispering “Life is beautiful, but fleeting.” But black locusts? Black locusts, with their curvy, hyper-dramatic branches, seem to be shouting “Woo Hoo!” or “Bwaahahahaha!” My neighbor Tom calls them “That witchy wood.” It’s as though other trees are simply trees, but black locusts are an artist’s rendition of a tree — an illustration in a book of fairy tales — complete with wicked thorns, deeply-furrowed bark and outrageously gnarly boles.

Black locusts seem shaky on the very concept of being a tree. I have seen a black locust knocked over in a storm grow a phalanx of new trunks straight up from the prone one, dig new roots into the ground to replace the upended ones, and continue growing as a row of young trees. The tips of black locust roots, especially when the mother tree is cut down, also act as runners from which new trees spring up, usually in the middle of our blueberry patch.

In springtime, as the other trees leaf out, the black locusts stand stark and bare before finally getting a clue from the others and putting forth their feathery blue-green foliage, followed by luxurious banks of fragrant flowers. Flowering season is short but sweet. Bees love the nectar, and transform it into such excellent honey

that the tree is sometimes cultivated for that purpose. The flowers are edible when dipped in batter and fried.

In contrast, the rest of the tree produces flavonoids, which are poisonous to grazing animals and cause splinters to be exceptionally painful. The wood is hard, heavy, and dense, and the flavonoids make it resistant to rot — a useful trait.

When we first had a woodstove, we considered black locust unburnable. A black locust log on the fire would make a bunch of stinky smoke, then extinguish the blaze. Now we know its secret: the logs must be thoroughly dried — for two years or more — and the fire must be very hot before the log will burn. Treated this way, black locust wood gives superlative heat and leaves little ash.

Why is black locust such a maverick among trees? Take a close look at its flowers and seed pods. They look like they belong to a bean or pea plant, and they are, in fact, cousins to the beans and peas. Black locusts are legumes. Like all legumes, their roots fix nitrogen. Their curvaceous limbs are, essentially, huge vines. It’s easy to guess which fairy tale black locusts belong to. Expatriates of the witchy woods, they are giant bean stalks, waiting to be climbed by Jack.

Here is the Wikipedia link for *Robinia pseudoacacia*:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinia_pseudoacacia

The Newfane Town Forest

By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester

Back in the late 1980s, the Town of Newfane's highway garage was woefully inadequate and did not meet required specifications. With no land at that site to locate an up-to-date facility, the town was on the hunt for a suitable property for the new garage. The search committee found the perfect property just outside of Williamsville Village, but it was 162 acres and the town only wanted a few acres. The owner would not budge when approached with an offer to purchase just 10 acres. So in 1992 the town decided to purchase the entire property, build the garage, and then develop a process to determine what to do with the woodlot.

The Selectboard appointed a Town Forest Committee to oversee the activities on the Forest. I was asked to be their technical adviser and felt that we should have a forest management plan prepared. We applied for a Planning Grant under the Urban & Community Forestry Program and got funding for half of the cost. Local consulting forester and past WOA president George Weir prepared the plan. The seller had pretty much "logged off" most of the merchantable timber, leaving a highgraded forest that would likely provide no immediate income. An inventory confirmed that the land contained insufficient timber volumes to conduct a commercial timber sale.

Shortly after acquiring the property, Newfane created its first Conservation Commission. This group decided to center its activities around enhancing recreational opportunities in the town forest. During my many years of tenure on the commission, we developed a trail system that has three different loops of varying difficulty. Once we marked the trails and they started getting some use, we realized that we needed to make some additional infrastructure enhancements that would provide a better/safer tread surface, help preclude erosion, and harden the trails so that they were more stable. We wanted to have stone steps for crossing several small brooks and in another place we needed a wooden bridge. In one other short, but very steep section, we believed that some built-in wooden steps would go far in preventing erosion as well as in making the path safer.

These planned improvements were beyond the scope of a small volunteer commission of folks in their 50s-70s, so we reached out to the Recrea-

tional Trails Grant Program. We succeeded in getting two \$10,000 grants (in back-to-back years) to hire a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crew who would come in and provide the young muscle and expertise needed to upgrade our trail system. This program allowed us to provide matching funds for the grant to cover volunteer time and any other administrative support. I took a few days of leave to act as clerk-of-the-works so that my time could be used as part of the match.

Our VYCC crews were quite amazing. They built the brook crossings, bridge, and steps, and even put in about 150' of boardwalk over an area of wet soils. The crew worked for two weeks each year for two years and used no power tools, not even any "come-alongs." They moved all of the stone by hand or with pry bars, and "naturalized" any disturbance with leaf litter carried in from a hundred yards away. They even took the time to build a bench at Laura's Lookout, named in honor of Laura Bacon, our first Conservation Commission Chair. The VYCC project greatly improved our hiking network, which also provided some great stabilization for those areas that could have been degraded by high numbers of hikers.

When their work was completed, we ended up with a very aesthetically pleasing system of trails of easy to moderate difficulty. The trail system consists of three paths that all form nice loops and are blazed in white, yellow, or blue paint, respectively. The lengths range from 2.0 to 2.5 miles. Perhaps the most appealing is the White Fern Trail that follows Schoolhouse Brook. It passes by two very scenic cascades – Philura Falls and Big Rock Falls – that provide a gorgeous backdrop along the tract's main water course.

The Commission has prepared a brochure that also gives some background on the town forest as well as insights into some of the fauna and flora of the area. Feel free to contact me for either hard copy or a PDF scan that I can e-mail to you.

Newfane's town forest is truly a recreational gem in the middle of the West River Valley. To get to the trailhead, turn onto Depot Road from Route 30 and drive almost to Williamsville Village. If you pass the cemetery, you've gone a tad too far. On the left you'll see the town garage with a small

parking area along the side of the road. If coming from Williamsville, shortly after leaving the village you'll see the parking lot on your right just past the cemetery. Once parked, walk down the gravel road toward the garage and just past the chain across the road. The trailhead will veer off to the right and in 50 feet you will come to a new kiosk. All trails start and end here.

In our last *Woodlot Tips* I mentioned that towns acquire their town forests in many different ways. In our case in Newfane, we got a town forest by building a new highway garage, with the added bonus of now having this incredible woodland resource for all to enjoy!

Arthur Westing substitutes this list for his usual kind of Woodland Secret article. It will provide good reading while the days are still so long and snowy.

Woodland Secret #17 — Some Great Books

Presented here are a dozen books that can be highly recommended, and which reveal a considerable number of interesting secrets of relevance, at least in part, to the woodlands of southeastern Vermont:

- Allport, Susan. 1990. *Sermons in Stone: the Stone Walls of New England and New York*. New York: W.W. Norton, 205 pp. [See also Thorson below.]
- Beattie, Molly, Thompson, Charles, & Levine, Lynn. 1993. *Working with Your Woodland: a Landowner's Guide*. Rev. edn. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 279 pp. [Lynn Levine lives in Dummerston.]
- Cronon, William. 1983. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill & Wang, 241 pp.
- Johnson, Charles W. 1998. *The Nature of Vermont: Introduction and Guide to a New England Environment*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 354 pp.
- Klyza, Christopher McGrory & Trombulak, Stephen C. 1999. *The Story of Vermont: a Natural and Cultural History*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 240 pp.
- Little, Elbert L. 1980. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees: Eastern Region*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 715 pp.
- Logan, William Bryant. 2005. *Oak: the Frame of Civilization*. New York: W.W. Norton, 336 pp.
- Perlin, John. 1991. *A Forest Journey: the Role of Wood in the Development of Civilization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 445 pp.
- Sterba, Jim. 2012. *Nature Wars: the Incredible Story of how Wildlife Comebacks Turned Backyards into Battlegrounds*. New York: Crown, 344 pp.
- Thompson, Elizabeth H. & Sorenson, Eric R. 2000. *Wetland, Woodland, Wildland: a Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 456 pp.
- Thorson, Robert M. 2002. *Stone by Stone: the Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls*. New York: Walker, 287 pp. [See also Allport above.]
- Wessels, Tom. 2010. *Forest Forensics: a Field Guide to Reading the Forested Landscape*. Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 158 pp. [Tom Wessels lives in Westminster.]

A good turnout for the oak plantation and winter logging tour in Guilford at the property of David Snyder and Sara Coffey.

In 2010, to counter heavy deer browse, a 12-foot high mesh fence was strung between trees on ¼-inch cable around approximately three acres. The ground was prepared by gathering and chipping slash, which was then spread and inoculated with mycelium. Then 1,100 oak whips (1-year-old seedlings) — 650 Bur and 450 White — were planted at a dense 6-8-foot spacing. Herbaceous growth, such as blackberry canes, has been cut back annually since then to reduce competition.



Note the stark difference between the inside and the outside of the fence.

Bur and White Oak are uncommon in our region and this project demonstrates what it takes to establish a plantation of these interesting species. For the owners, it is a “labor of love,” as money has been spent with no guarantee of income in their lifetime.

Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa), aka scrub oak. Bark may have ridged cork-like appearance.

It is very drought and fire resistant and more shade tolerant than either red or white oaks. More than any other oaks it may bear seed for some 400 years, starting at 35 years with good seed crops every two to three years. It has the largest acorns of any native oaks that are eaten, along with the foliage, by a wide variety of animals, from insects to bears. Bur Oak is a slow-growing tree, and the largest reported specimen reached 170 feet high and 84 inches dbh in the lower Ohio Valley.

White Oak (Quercus alba) aka stave oak, from making barrels

White Oak is the most important lumber tree of the white oak group. It is a deep-rooted tree that grows with many other species — other oaks and hickories. Mast years are every four to ten years. Individual trees have been recorded measuring 150 feet high and 96 inches dbh. With thinning, diameter growth rates can be double that of trees in un-thinned stands.

The White Pine harvest was on a stand that had been abandoned as pastureland in 1920 and periodically thinned. The last harvest occurred more than 20 years ago. The 2015 silvicultural prescription is for an overstory removal cut; a harvest of mature pine on about ten acres; and to leave hemlock and clumps of young hardwoods, especially black birch.



A “cookie” from the White Pine harvest that shows the tree and others in the harvest to be about 100-110 years old.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming Programs
(See inside for details)

Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m.

Annual Sugarhouse Tour

Friday, March 27, 3 – 5 p.m.

**The Franklin Farm in Guilford, Vt.
Management/Pruning of Ornamental Sugar
Maples**

Saturday, March 28, 9:30 a.m.

**Newfane Common
Somerset Old Growth Forest Tour**

Save the Date! — June 6

Strolling of the Heifers — WRWA will be there!

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.