



SWPWO

NEWSLETTER

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners

September 2004

September 8 Meeting Sept 11 Field Trip Visualizing Your Forest

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The next meeting of the association will be held on September 8 at 7:00 PM in Building #10 at the Green County Fairground in Waynesburg. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Jim Finley, a professor at Penn State University's School of Forest Resources. He will present a very interesting program on "Visualizing Your Forest- Simulating Forest Management Decisions". Jim has developed a very unique computer program in which the landowner can actually see how present day decisions can affect their forest years into the future. Dr. Finley is no stranger to our group. He gave a great talk at the March meeting on forest value and use.

A follow up field trip will be taken to Arlyn Perkey's tree farm and Stewardship Forest in western Greene County, on Saturday, September 11th. At Arlyn's farm we can apply what we have learned from Dr. Finley. Arlyn has done a tremendous amount of forestry work on his farm since 1990 and has the documentation to show us. Car pooling will be available from building #10 at the Greene County Fairgrounds at noon or you can go directly to Arlyn's place. Take Rt. 21 West out of Waynesburg. Go through Rogersville. At Rutan, take a left onto Jacob's Run Rd. Take the first left onto Claylick road. Follow this road south for about 1 mile. You'll

see Arlyn's Tree Farm and Stewardships Forests signs at Muddy Hollow Road. As always, the meeting and field trip are open to the members and the public. See you there.

The Value of Dead Trees and Dead Leaves

Deteriorating trees are actually vital elements of healthy forests. They release nutrients, prevent erosion, store moisture, protect seedlings and supply food and shelter for wildlife.

As a tree's health deteriorates, it begins to lose the battle against invading organisms and the wood becomes weaker and softer- ideal for cavity excavators such as woodpeckers. Many wildlife species use tree cavities for sanctuary against predators, unfavorable weather conditions, and for nesting and brooding. Cavity nesters play a significant role in forest ecosystems by preying on pest insects and dispersing seeds. Standing dead trees (snags) not only provide cavities but also are favorite perching spots for hawks and owls. Some wildlife use the spaces between the loose bark and the tree trunks for roosting. Dead trees retain their ability to benefit the forest even after they fall. Downed and decaying wood provides cover, foraging habitat and egg laying sites for wildlife as well as, secure travel corridors and thermal protection for wildlife during the winter months.

As the logs decompose they slowly release nutrients that help nurture future tree growth and prevent erosion by holding the soil in place. The branches and tops of fallen trees help protect seedling from animal browsing.

Woody debris also plays a critical role in aquatic environments. Logs and branches that fall into streams and rivers help diversify habitat by creating deep pools, shady areas and shelter. Besides habitat, logs can protect stream banks from erosion and trap leaves, which together with rotting wood, is a major source of nutrients for small streams.

Falling and decaying leaves make what is called humus which enriches the soil. Leaves are important for a tree's health because they produce all the "food" for the plant. From the leaves, this food travels into the vascular system of the tree to where it is needed – to the apical bud for growth, to the flowers for fruit production and mostly to the roots for storage and winter survival. The leaves are producing this "food" until they fall to the ground, therefore they are a supply of nutrients that will break down into the soil and be taken up by the roots of the tree during the following seasons.

The acids produced by the decay of the leaves also help to perform one of the miracles of nature. These acids of decay dissolve rock (over many many years) and rock is the original substance of which soil is made. So, trees from year to year, are constantly "converting a liability into an asset" as a businessperson would say. The stones of the field which are of a great nuisance to the farmer in their raw state, are of great benefit to him when their hidden riches are released- when by nature they are converted to soil. Rocks contain sulfur, potash, phosphorus, potash soda, iron, silica – all of which returns to the soil.

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This newsletter is produced about 5 times per year. It is published about two weeks prior to the meetings. Articles and/or ideas are welcome. Contact the editors John Burnham at 724-223-8781 or e-mail at burnhamjc@msn.com or Gay Thistle at 724-499-5190 thistle@greenepa.net

Yet Another Use for Hardwoods

While traveling on vacation this summer we spent a few days in Indianapolis, Indiana where we visited a farmers market and found some interesting local cuisine. There were a lot of Amish baked goods, fresh vegetables, flowers and honey which are typical fare at farmers markets. What we did find that was unique was a vendor who produces syrups out of tree bark. They offered free samples and between the kids and I, we tried them all. Its consistency is thin, like the maple syrup my father used to make, but the flavors are really interesting. We spoke a long time to this couple about their product. They have jury-rigged an old, high pressure army coffee pot (which had to pump out 300 cups of coffee in short order) to press the bark for its syrup. They had syrups from all the hardwoods we know- hickory, locust, poplar, etc. The syrup is good on buckwheat pancakes. We like the poplar flavor. It is an interesting story and another product line from our hardwoods. Check out the website at www.hickoryworks.com for more information. *Submitted by Gay Thistle*



***Executive Committee for the year 2001
Officers***

Harold Thistle- President

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Nadine Obermiller- Secretary

Ed Hartman- Treasurer
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Robert Brown
Advisors
Bill Wentzel` Arlyn Perkey

About Tree Roots

It is difficult to study the entire root system of a tree. The tree root system is unseen and unappreciated. Heavy woody roots, with a diameter of more than 12" may be seen near the tree base, however, trees also produce a multitude of hairlike, non-woody roots. Roots obtain water, oxygen and minerals from the soil. The function of the root system is to anchor the tree, take up minerals from the soil and to store food. Trees have three types of roots. Secondary roots branch off and extend horizontally all around the tree. These long woody transport roots branch into tertiary roots and rootlets, etc. The function of the secondary root is to transport food to the root tips as well as to send water and essential elements up to the leaves. Tertiary roots are structures whose function is to absorb water and essential elements. Tertiary roots do not form woody material. These roots divide into smaller roots, each ending in a dense mass of fine feeder roots (rootlets). Rootlets are hair like and made of non-woody material. These roots only last a short time and are re-grown at a fast rate during the growing season. The longer a secondary root survives, the larger it becomes. It grows exactly as a tree trunk with new growth being on the outside ring.

In trying to determine why tree roots grow close to the surface, you must understand that roots grow where soil resources are most plentiful. Because of the

horizontal growth pattern of the tree root system, most tree roots and nearly 99% of the tree's root mass is located in the top three feet of the soil and can occupy an area more than two or four times the diameter of the root crown. The roots can radiate out far beyond the drip line, typically at a distance of one to one and one half the height of the tree. Roots need oxygen in order to grow. Compacted, clay soils can restrict oxygen for the roots and therefore restrict growth of the tree. *This article was reprinted with permission and with edits from N.E. Ohio Forestry Assoc. . Submitted by Bill Wentzel. Edited by Gay Thistle*

Membership Information

Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Renewal time is November. You are welcome to join at any time, send name, address, phone number and payment to

SWPWO
195 E., High St
Waynesburg, PA 15370

SWPWO Schedule for 2004-2005 **Year**

Join us at our next meeting

*Wednesday, Sept 8, 2004
At the Waynesburg Fairgrounds*

Our Purpose

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners (SWPWO), a not for profit association, is an organization of individuals interested in sound woodland management practices which encourage the diverse use of forests for timber production, wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreation and to promote this multiple-use philosophy through education and technical assistance for the benefit of the membership and general public.

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195 High St
Waynesburg, PA 15370