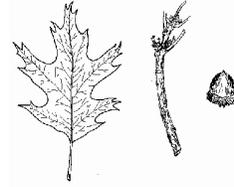


# SWPWO



Red Oak

**Southwest PENNA Woodland Owners Assoc.**

**October 2012**

[www.busybeaver.cs.pitt.edu/swpwo](http://www.busybeaver.cs.pitt.edu/swpwo)

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## **NEXT MEETING and FIELD TRIP**

**October 24 Meeting**

**WED, 7 PM: Washington, PA**

### **Genetic Diversity in our Forests**

Cynthia Morton, Botanist, Carnegie Museum, will discuss the implications of monoculture tree planting, including tree cloning, as practiced in urban settings as well as in the countryside.

**Place:** First Floor Meeting Room, Courthouse Square Building, 100 W. Beau St.

**October 27 Field Trip**

**SAT, 1 to 4**

### **Schenley Park, in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh**

Phil Gruszka, the Director of Park Management of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, will discuss the impressive work accomplished in its' four regional parks—Schenley, Frick, Highland, Riverview—by staff, volunteers, and the Dept. of Public Works. He will review recent improvements in Park biodiversity and woodland aesthetics. Phil is a hands-on manager, planting trees and shrubs, and tackling the Emerald Ash Borer, oak wilt disease, invasive plants, deer damage, and water quality issues. Following the presentation, we will tour Schenley Park's century old woods with a weather eye for EAB damage.

Meet at 1:00 at the **Schenley Park Café and Visitors Center** located in the Park across from the east end of Phipps Conservatory (away from Pitt). Adjacent metered parking is available, with free parking nearby in the Park. If so inclined, join us in the Schenley Park Café at noon for a warm up.

-----**Russ Orme**

## **Hard Water and Glyphosate**

The SWPWO September Meeting emphasizing correct use of herbicides, and the associated field trip to the Burnham Tree Farm, were excellent, and I learned quite a bit about spraying herbicide on the various invasives that inhibit tree planting and tree growth in our area. One topic that I was surprised did not come up was the issue of mixing glyphosate with hard water.

I occasionally work with land managers developing programs to combat invasive plants on a large scale. Currently, there is a plan being developed to combat an invasive grass that is rapidly overrunning the iconic ecosystem of the Sonoran Desert in NM and AZ. As part of this plan development, we are evaluating using glyphosate (specifically

Roundup PRO®). This is a Monsanto product and, given the fact that this plan could potentially result in tens of thousands of acres of pesticide application, Monsanto has been quite interested in the effort. As part of the interaction with Monsanto we were told that glyphosate is rendered ineffective by hard water.

Water is made hard by particulate of such elements as calcium, magnesium and iron. Water is generally considered hard if there are more than 200 parts per million of this particulate matter in the water. Glyphosate is negatively (-) charged and is bound up by the positive charge (+) of many of these particulate constituents. The solution is to add a water softener, and Monsanto recommends ammonium sulfate (AMS) be added to the glyphosate water mixture to improve efficacy. Efficacy is a term used in pesticide application that roughly corresponds to effectiveness; additives to a mix to improve the performance of a pesticide are known as adjuvants. Thus, AMS is an adjuvant that is added to the glyphosate water mixture to improve efficacy.

So, why is this not generally discussed? I looked on the Roundup PRO® label for a discussion of this and there is no mention of it. Aha! A Mystery. Doing what I do for a living, I have contacts in various aspects of pesticide application. I contacted a friend in Michigan who consults on pesticide application and he had an interesting read on this issue. The chemical manufacturers do acknowledge that this is a problem, but they market the various brands of glyphosate as homeowner ready and easy to use. Since the hard water problem is specific to certain areas and proportional to the hardness of the water, they would prefer to ignore the issue. Interesting.

I know various people at Monsanto. My contact there offered further insight. AMS is also marketed by Monsanto and it costs as much in AMS per tank to soften water as the glyphosate costs. He suggests it is just as easy to increase the rate of glyphosate to recover equivalent efficacy as it is to add AMS. In a large project such as combatting our invasive desert grass, Monsanto has substantial liability if the project fails and also supplies the AMS, and so profits from its use. In marketing to homeowners and small landowners, the stakes are lower and ease of use seems to be the most important factor.

Where does that leave us? First of all, be aware that you are bound by law not to exceed the concentration of pesticide beyond that specified on the pesticide label for a given plant. Since the consensus at our meeting was that most folks were already spraying at the maximum rate for a given weed, increasing concentration is not a legal option. A theme during our meeting discussion was that many people had experienced application failures even at the maximum rate. There may be many reasons for this, but generally speaking, the application rates specified on a label should be very capable of killing the designated weed. If you think about it, herbicides would not become huge commercial successes, as has happened with glyphosate, if the label specified they be used in a solution that is too weak to kill the target plant. It is more common that chemical manufacturers are accused of elevating concentrations to guarantee efficacy and increase sales.

The other factor to consider in our case is that much of our area does have very hard water. This leaves me concluding that water hardness may very well be a factor in the effectiveness of glyphosate in our area. There are various ways to soften water (using AMS is certainly an option) and I would be very interested in learning from our members if softening water does increase the effectiveness of our glyphosate herbicide applications.

-----**Harold Thistle**

## The Day We Drove Old Olive Down

There they stood. Not in perfect columns, but somehow perfectly placed, extending out from a stone wall, advancing. Their purpose was as clear as bright sunlight. Wave upon wave of autumn olive, inexorably overrunning the field of battle, backed by squads of ailanthus, bittersweet, and honeysuckle. The gauntlet was proffered, a *fait accompli*, unless.....

Perkey brought his Brigade to the top of a rise. He had seen this scenario many times before. He paused his troops as meaningful glances were exchanged. We knew what we had to do.

Cap'n **John** sounded the call, "This one is for Bob, cheers for **Bob D.**" We have missed our comrade from past campaigns, absent now these many months. Stalwart **Mark** led us--rucksacks sloshing, nozzles splayed--at a deliberate pace to engage the invaders. It was highly unlikely the enemy would cut and run; it would be hand-to-hand, limb-to-limb combat, an atmosphere of desperation and dying.

Suddenly, a conscript, eyes ablaze, reared up as if to charge alone into the fray. "**Russ**, don't do it!" I yelled, a moment too late, as he disappeared into a thicket, enveloped in a volley of nettles, seed pods and blooms. **Janet and Raul**, unruffled, turned the right flank and wedged out a thorny opening, followed in by **Billy and Bob**, slashing and cussing. **Earl, Phil and Bob E** were the next wave, the battle now fully joined. In the chaos and confusion, a cohort of sharp-edged **Thistles** appeared out of nowhere on the far left, unopposed. About to sound the alarm, I was taken aback by their actions. By Providence's Lights, they--thwacking and spritzing--had come over to fight on our side! No Confederates they. Meantime, **Mo** and **Bobbeye**, aides de camp, secured the rear, succoring the wounded and laying down an antidotal, vaguely pleasing chatter, while **Maria** remained at Brigade headquarters monitoring communications and supply lines.

At last, our adrenaline (not to mention our glyphosate) spent, we slumped to the ground. What exactly had we accomplished? Someone spat out a virtual hairball amalgamated of hulls, husks, desiccated flower petals and assorted vegetative flotsam. We were at a collective low point, stained by the ordeal of violence as a patina of poison wafted over us. Brig. Gen. **Perkey** reached for perspective, "When we reconvene on this field years hence to memorialize this momentous effort....."

And then we saw it: poking up amidst the detritus, a foot high, lustrous leaved, intact, a red oak seedling... and a broad scattering of acorns all about. We raised our eyes. A maturing oak, its trunk now exposed to its burgeoning base, stood above the tumble down stone wall at the edge of the old woods.

from "A Private's Diary: The Ongoing Battle for the Burnham Plantation,"  
events of September 15, 2012.

## News and Notes

Pennsylvania has confirmed its' first case of **Chronic Wasting Disease**, a neurological disease fatal to deer. The positive test was at a deer farm in Adams County in the south central part of the state. Penna is the 23<sup>rd</sup> state subject to the illness, first discovered in Colorado in 1967, which is also fatal to elk and moose. The disease has not been found in Pa's wild deer population, and there is no evidence that it can be transmitted to humans. Quarantine measures are in place. There is no cure. The symptoms—stumbling, weight loss, increased drinking—are similar to EHD, the midge-borne deer disease which made an appearance in Greene & Washington Counties this year, though not nearly so widespread as its' last infestation in 2007. Take precautions when dressing out venison during the harvest.

This wraps up our 12<sup>th</sup> annum, and a fun one at that. We have lined up a stimulating slate of events for next year, with the ground breaking Pennsylvania **Private Forest Landowners Conference** scheduled for May 10 and 11 in Altoona.

**Dues**, unchanged since the Andrew Jackson Administration, remain at **\$10, or \$15 for a family**. Sign on for 2013 at the October meeting, or see remittance information below.

### **Executive Committee, Officers for 2012**

Gay Thistle - President

Mike Irvin -Vice President

David Cressey- Secretary, Newsletter Editor

Maria Piantanida - Treasurer

### **Board of Directors**

Mark Fajerski, Russell Orme, Raul Chiesa

### **Advisors**

Bill Wentzel, Arlyn Perkey, Russell Gibbs - Service Forester, PA Bureau of Forestry

### **Past Presidents**

John Burnham, Harold Thistle, Bob Daley

### ***Our Purpose***

*Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners (SWPWO), a not for profit association, is an organization of individuals interested in sound woodland management practices to 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.*

### **Membership Information**

**Membership dues will be collected at meetings or can be sent to:**

**SWPWO  
2506 Hollywood Dr.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

**If sending in dues, please include name, address, phone number and an e-mail address. Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Keep your membership up to date to continue to receive the newsletter and yearly calendar.**