

THE MANITOBA WOODLOT

Issue Number 93

Wisdom in the Woods

February/March 2012

A future in firewood

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The Manitoba Woodlot is published six times annually as a service to the membership of The Woodlot Association of Manitoba (WAM).

WAM seeks to promote an understanding of sustainable woodlot management, increase income and employment potential for the woodlot sector, promote the use of woodlot products in the place of non-renewable and imported products, and develop human resources in woodlot management.

WAM represents the interests of our members within the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners (CFWO). The CFWO makes those interests known to forestry ministers at both levels of government.

WAM also has a representative to the Manitoba Model Forest, another organization that promotes sustainable management of Manitoba's wooded areas.

WAM is a non-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, which meets monthly. Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held each year before the end of March and is open to all members in good standing.

The WAM directors for 2011/2012 are as follows:

- Len Riding, President, (204) 347-5082
- Mike James, Past President
- Allan Webb, Secretary-Treasurer, (204) 467-8648
- Bob Austman, Director
- Tom Dykstra, Director
- Jeff Lord, Director
- Bruce MacLeod, Director
- Irene de Graaf, Director
- Ken Fosty, Director
- Andrea Kraayeveld, Technical Advisor

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EDITORIAL—

Giving MB woodlot owners a stronger voice

The WAM board appreciates the vote of confidence from our members in their early support of the Taking Root initiative, but we can do more.

Organizations in Manitoba that share a mandate of advancing the interests of private foresters and woodlot owners met in a 2011 roundtable to sort out what roles each organization is best suited to play.

The Woodlot Association of Manitoba is, it was agreed, best suited to act as advocates for woodlot owners and to speak to government on their behalf.

In part, that is because some groups, such as the Manitoba Forestry Branch and MAFRI Agro Woodlot Program, are themselves part of government. The Manitoba Forestry Association has a large and varied mandate that serves many groups and advances education and public awareness, while WAM concentrates on issues that affect private woodlot owners.

WAM is best suited to advocate for its membership and for the province's woodlot owners as a whole. But it takes funding to be an effective voice.

All groups involved in woodlot activities are keenly aware of the limited program funding available, and it isn't in any group's interest that we be competing with each other for a larger share of the same small pot of money. Thus, participating groups agreed that there was no additional funding that could be made available to WAM for its advocacy efforts.

That's left the ball in WAM's court to figure out how to strengthen the roots of the organization and build it into a strong voice for the province's woodlot owners.

In January, the WAM board set up the Taking Root Project, which is intended to get WAM started on a building exercise. When WAM members provide financial support, they are investing in WAM, and in WAM's future. The letter introducing the Taking Root initiative went out to members in January, along with their membership renewal form.

The early focus of the Taking Root Project is to improve our website to provide Manitoba woodlot owners with better access to information and links on issues important to us; to look at educational workshops that help us better manage our woodlots; to seek out innovative ways of generating revenue; and to secure adequate funding for The Manitoba Woodlot.

There are important issues ahead for private foresters. WAM directors are working to grow WAM into the kind of organization that works effectively with government and other stakeholders in advocating for the interests of Manitoba's woodlot owners.

Emerson tree largest in province... so far

By Sheilla Jones

Emerson mayor Wayne Arseny is justifiably proud of a giant cottonwood tree near the town. He has nominated it as a provincial heritage tree.

"The tree is located just north of Emerson," said Arseny, "on the west side of the Red River on what we call the lower river bottom forest. It is 28'6" around. It's so big Manitoba Forestry doesn't have a core-tapper device long enough to determine the age of this tree."

Arseny said the tree, despite its size, is not easy to spot because it is surrounded by the heavy canopy of other cottonwoods, and it is only when people walk down along the river that it comes into view.

Arseny suspects the Emerson cottonwood is the largest tree in the province, at least so far. Others could nominate an even larger tree.

The Heritage Tree Program has been collecting data on "amazing" trees in Manitoba since 1985, but the program counts on people nominating trees for three categories. That includes a record tree, a notable tree, and a historic tree.

"It's not often we can brag about having something in Manitoba which is the biggest," said Arseny. "The amazing tree quest has definitely captivated people's attention. I am now getting phone calls from all over the province telling me about their big tree. It may not be as big as ours, but in their town, it's special. And that is what this is all about, creating interest in our trees, and giving people something to brag about."

Arseny said that large, old cottonwoods along the Red River valley are likely about 115 years old.

"In the Red River in this area in the 1880s, there were virtually no trees of any significant size growing on the banks. Prairie fires kept the plains quite treeless. And what few trees were growing along the river were cut for firewood for the seven steamboats operating between Lower Fort Gary and Fargo."

Arseny suspects that cottonwoods, some today measuring 17-24 feet around, were mostly planted by Mennonite settlers in the mid-1890s. "This is quite obvious as one drives westward towards Gretna and Altona, seeing many of the original farm yards surrounded by these towering giants."

Arseny has been encouraging people to nominate their special trees because they don't last forever.

He said that he and other tree enthusiasts spotted a cottonwood with a 25-foot circumference last spring along the Roseau River in the RM of Franklin. Unfortunately, the river bank eroded and the tree toppled into the river.



Photo courtesy of Wayne Arseny

Emerson mayor Wayne Arseny poses in front of the huge cottonwood along the Red River near Emerson. It measures nearly 29-feet around, and could be the largest tree in Manitoba.

To nominate a tree, go to the Manitoba Forestry Association website at www.thinktrees.org and look for Heritage Trees under Programs.



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WOODLOT PROGRAM

Andrea Kraayeveld
Extension Officer
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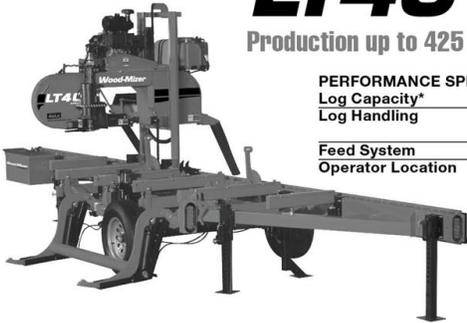
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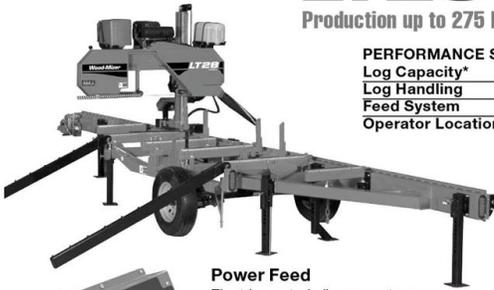
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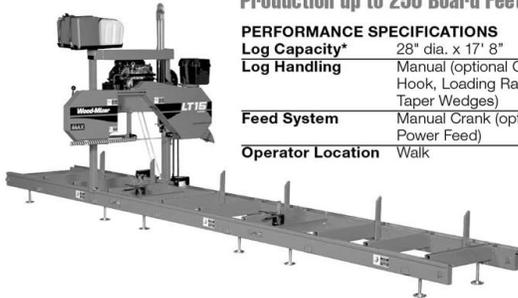
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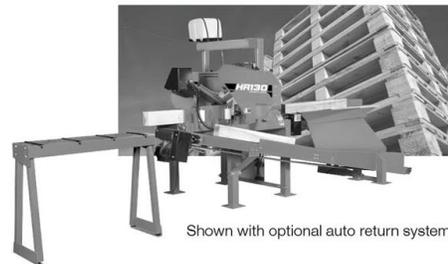
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Riparian tax credit may apply to woodlots

Some woodlot owners may be eligible to claim a tax reduction under the Manitoba government's Riparian Tax Credit program.

"Proper management of land along lakes and waters," says the province's Finance department, "helps prevent erosion and improve water quality. It may reduce emission of greenhouse gases. When lakeshore and river and stream banks are healthy over a wide area, it can even help reduce extremes of the flood and drought cycle."

The program is primarily directed at farmers to encourage them to keep their cattle grazing and cropping away from the province's waterways. However, any woodlot owner who has, in the past, used the land along a waterway for grazing or cropping could also qualify.

The program offers landowners \$20 per acre to let crop land go back to native or tame forage, or to bale hay on land that was formerly used to graze cattle. It offers \$28 per acre for former grazing land where there is no longer any agricultural activity.

Qualifying landowners would be eligible to receive a \$100-\$140 tax credit per riparian acre over five years. Sloped land along waterways is eligible for an additional tax reduction.

Under this program, a riparian zone is "a strip of land bordering a lake, river or creek. Healthy riparian zones are densely covered with a variety of trees, shrubs, grasses and other vegetation."

Landowners taking part in the program are required to make a five-year commitment to cease agricultural activity within 100 feet of a major river, lake or other designated waterway. Grassed waterways, seasonal creeks and dry riverbeds do not qualify.

Under this five-year program, landowners would agree to leave the riparian strip to native and tame forages, bushes and trees, or any combination of them. Landowners would also agree not to cut the trees for lumber or firewood.

Although this program is mainly directed at farmers, the program is somewhat flexible. Landowners who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the Riparian Tax Credit could still qualify. People are advised to contact the Manitoba Tax Assistance Office at 1-800-782-0771 to see if their land qualifies for the tax credit.

The deadline for applications is April 30, 2012. Additional information is available online at www.gov.mb.ca/finance/tao/riparian.



WAM AGM

Come out to the WAM AGM at the Sungro Centre in Beausejour to hear the latest news on Manitoba's woodlot programs. After lunch, we'll head over to Ernie Reimer's wood yard near Tyndall for a first-hand look at his operation.

When: Saturday, April 14, 2012, 9:30 am

Where: Sungro Centre, Beausejour

Lunch: \$20

Agenda

9:30 Registration and coffee

10:00 WAM business meeting and election of officers

11:00 MAFRI presentation - Shane Tornblom

11:15 MBMF presentation - Bob Austman

11:30 MFA Woodlot program - Andrea Kraayeveld

11:45 Firewood markets - Ernie Reimer

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:30 Tour of Ernie Reimer's wood yard

Note: If the weather is wet, be sure to bring rubber boots.

Directions

• Sungro Centre is on the south-east corner of Beausejour. From Hwy 44, go south on Hwy 302 about 1.5 km to James Ave, and look for the recreation complex. The Sungro Centre is just back of the Legion.

• Ernie Reimer's wood yard is on the south side of Hwy 44 near Tyndall, 12 km west of Beausejour.

Reimer taps into hot firewood market

By Sheilla Jones

Firewood is a hot commodity in Manitoba, and Tyndall sawyer Ernie Reimer is scrambling to meet the demand.

“Baby boomers are a big part of our market,” said Reimer, on a sunny March day at his operation on Hwy 44. “They’re heading out to the bush with their trailers and chain saws. They drive by, then turn around and come in to buy their firewood. They never make it to the bush.”

Reimer said he moved about 4-thousand cords of wood last year, and is looking to sell more than 6-thousand cords this year.

“Our market is a one-hundred-mile radius from here,” said Reimer, “and that includes Winnipeg and cottage country. But we’ve had some of our wood go as far as Calgary and Thompson.”

Reimer is also supplying a growing market for custom cut lumber.

“People are getting excited about the rustic look. They want to build cottages and gazebos and fences with lumber that is bigger, rougher and more rustic, like 4 X 16” beams. People are having a hard time finding this kind of lumber or they have to wait for six or eight months for a special order.”

Reimer said he is happy to leave the standard 2 X 4 dimensional lumber to the big chain lumber stores and focus on special orders.

“Contractors are saying that if we can get them the material they want when they need it, they will buy it. Of course, they’re paying a premium for that. But with all the saw mills around, lots of them are shut down.”

Reimer’s operation is often a noisy place, with the firewood splitter going full tilt. On one day in March, sawyer John Weimar from Beausejour brought his Wood-Mizer Super LT40 into Reimer’s yard to cut lumber on-site.

“It’s our first day bringing in a mill to cut lumber,” said Reimer. “I’ve had a lot of custom requests, but haven’t had a mill to do the cutting.”

One sound you won’t hear in Reimer’s yard is the roar of chain saws. To make his operation efficient, Reimer has invested in as much mechanical handling as he can.

“I’ve got chain saws in the shed, but I’m not even sure if my guys working in the yard would even know how to start one. We just don’t use them.”

EJ Reimer Enterprises is still fairly new to the firewood business, said Reimer, but he admits he’s got the “wood bug”.

“My grandfather was the local sawyer way back in their community in Mexico, and wood is something our family has always enjoyed, and you’ve got to love what

you do.”

Reimer worked on a slasher in Black River. Then, in 2004, he and his father John bought a truck with a flat-deck trailer and a picker truck for loading logs onto the trailer. Before long, they had a second rig going and a slasher of their own for harvesting. They started working with Dmytrow Forest Products and in 2009, bought out the entire company from the retiring owner.

The Reimers set up their new operation on Hwy 44, just south of Tyndall, deliberately choosing a location on a busy four-lane divided highway, with easy access to markets and wood supplies in the area.

Ernie Reimer admitted that he was surprised at how unevolved the firewood business is in Manitoba, given, as he said, that humans have been warming themselves with wood fires for a very long time.

Photos by Jim Burns

Front page: Freshly split firewood piles up on Ernie Reimer's Tyndall wood yard.

Below: Beausejour sawyer John Weimar puts his Wood-Mizer sawmill to good use trimming logs in Reimer's yard for beams.



“We’ve got the same or better wood here in Manitoba than what you’ll buy at 7-Eleven stores. But the firewood industry here hasn’t really established itself. There is no handbook for this business, and I’ve learned a lot from my mistakes.”

One of the big surprises, said Reimer, is that there is no standardization in firewood, which also makes it harder for woodlot owners to supply him what he needs.

“The challenge is for both of us to make money from it. If I can haul 50 or 100 cords of wood off a woodlot in one day, then we can both make money. But sometimes I’ll go into someone’s yard and I can’t even get my truck near the logs. Or the logs haven’t been limbed, and it takes a lot of time to clean them up. If I can only load a couple of cords in a day, I’m not making any money. I can’t afford to do the limbing.”

Reimer said he can sell two semi loads of logs a day during the season, with each load holding 17 cords of 8-foot logs.

Reimer said he is looking to develop relationships with woodlot owners who can supply the kind of wood he’s looking for, particularly pine, birch and ash.

“Our goal is to have all species available, seasonal and non-seasonal, but that’s going to take quite a few years.”



Ernie Reimer gets his yard crew organized in his wood yard near Tyndall.

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2. Turn left (south) on rue des Ruines du Monastere.
3. Park in lot near Ruins.
4. Follow the road through the park to the three-storey guesthouse (St. Norbert Arts Centre).



Prairie Garden edition a celebration of trees

By Rick Durand, Guest Editor, *The 2012 Prairie Garden*

Trees have become a best friend to me. I enjoy their presence and I feel their struggle to withstand the assault incited by Mother Nature and mankind.

I celebrate with them in their moments of glory during spring flowering and autumn display, and I lament the passing of another growing season when winter approaches.

Trees showcase the coming of spring and its hope and potential to bring prosperity. Trees ground me and make me feel part of the organic world that is dynamic and uncompromising. Trees support a clean environment and make it livable and beautiful.

Trees have the ability to change a desert into an oasis, transform urban sprawl into a vibrant community and help maintain the precious soil for human existence.

This edition of *The 2012 Prairie Garden* on trees is to enlighten and remind the reader that trees, much like a best friend, create a world of magnificence around them.

Change is the word that best describes the last twelve years since the *Prairie Garden* featured Trees.

The increased invasion of exotic pests to North America, due to the exponential growth of world trade, has created havoc for our native trees. The longer and warmer fall seasons of the past twelve years have improved the chances of survival in protected prairie sites for collector trees such as hickory and Kentucky coffee tree.

Cultural change has been greatly impacted by the growth of technology, and many gardeners are using social networking to share gardening interests and their love of trees.

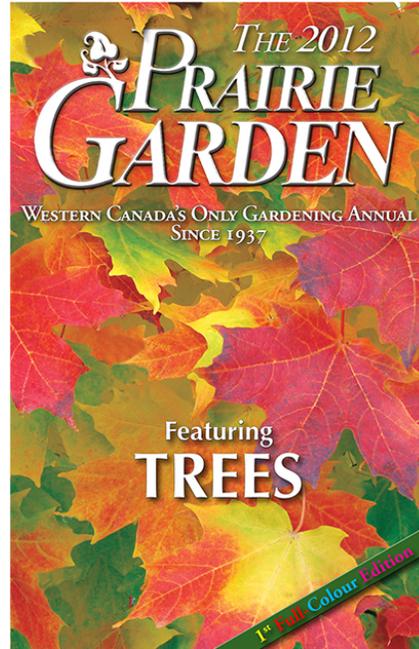
Ash, elms and ornamental aspens, the staple of our urban and rural plantings, are now being threatened by exotic pests. We need to adapt—and focus on identifying and using other tree choices.

The message for diversity in our urban forests over a decade ago has fallen on deaf ears. Now, more than ever, diversity is critical for the survival of our urban forests.

In this edition you will learn how prairie tree growers have established a tree trial to test a variety of trees that have the potential of successfully growing in our rural and urban sites. It is hoped that we will become more proactive and plant an assortment of trees for our urban locations that are resistant to the unwanted exotic pests.

This edition of the *Prairie Garden* touches on many aspects of trees, including threats to trees, tree diversity, our passion and love of the beauty of trees, tree products, tree carving, syrup making and bird watching.

The many food products that come from trees are unique and nutritious and the information on how you



can be successful in producing and/or creating them is presented by an eclectic group of prairie people.

The need to keep planting trees for future generations is a theme that is touched on throughout this book.

This 2012 *Prairie Garden* also includes memories of the passing of some special prairie innovators, a summary of the closing of the Morden Research Station woody ornamental program and the history of our successful Dutch Elm Disease program in Manitoba.

As you read this edition, I hope you will reflect how we as prairie gardeners need to keep the pioneer spirit alive and search for solutions to tree survival in our harsh continental climate. The tree lovers of the world need to harness the new communication technology to promote how trees enrich our lives and how trees are an essential part of our survival and culture.

I would like to thank the *Prairie Garden* committee. These volunteers work tirelessly every year to convey relevant and insightful prairie garden information to the gardening community at large.

A special thanks to Richard Denesiuk, the Editor, who reviews, compiles and organizes the many articles. Richard, you did an awesome job of compiling the *Prairie Garden's* first ever full-colour edition!

The dedication of the entire *Prairie Garden* committee to publicize accurate and current horticulture information is steadfast. Let us take this knowledge to better our community and environment.

Editorial courtesy of The 2012 Prairie Garden committee.



Why become a member of WAM?

As a member you will be promoting active stewardship of Manitoba's Private Woodlands. You will also receive a great deal, including:

—A Bi-Monthly Newsletter, complete with up-to-date information of upcoming events, current woodlot/forestry/conservation issues, and wood products/services available in your area. The Manitoba Woodlot newsletter can be mailed to a Canadian address or sent by email to a member. Using email is an opportunity to reduce the use of paper and receive the newsletter in colour.

—Access to the Woodlot Library, which is stocked full of woodlot-related information.

—Opportunities to Participate in Field Days/Demonstrations, Conferences and Meetings about topics related to woodlot management.

—Free Ads in our WAM member classified section in The Manitoba Woodlot.

—If you operate a commercial woodlot or agrowoodlot, the WAM membership fee is a tax deductible business expense. WAM provides a receipt and member card for membership payment by request only.

Membership in WAM is open to individuals and businesses. Dues are \$30.00. Those interested in membership can telephone (204) 453-7102.

Taxing times...

Tax benefits for managing woodlot as a farm

Under certain circumstances, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will class woodlot sales as a capital gain instead of ordinary income.

If you sell timber from a wooded area on your property, the proceeds could be taxed as either ordinary income or as a capital gain. With capital gains, only half of the income is taxable, so this is the preferred treatment.

To determine the tax treatment, CRA considers whether you operate your woodlot as a farm, and whether the woodlot is commercial or non-commercial.

Sale of timber from your property may be classed as capital gains if you operate a non-commercial woodlot, but sales must meet all of the following conditions:

- You could not have acquired the property with the intention of selling the timber.
- Someone other than you must cut and remove the standing timber.
- Your agreement for sale of the trees must be an isolated or infrequent transaction.
- Price for the timber must be a fixed amount, as opposed to being based on board feet or cubic meter.
- Timber can be removed only over a short period of time, usually less than 6 months.
- Purchase price cannot be dependant on the use or production of the land.

Generally speaking, where a taxpayer operates a woodlot as a business with reasonable expectation of profit, it is considered a commercial woodlot.

Sales of timber from a commercial woodlot will be taxed as business income if payments were based on the use of or production from the property. For example, a woodlot owner might give someone the ongoing right to cut and take timber from his lot over a period of time, and for that he is paid based on the

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

volume of timber taken.

If the commercial woodlot is mainly operated as a logging business it is not considered to be a farm operation. However, if the woodlot involves the planting, nurturing and harvesting of trees according to a forestry management agreement and considerable time is devoted to managing the growth, health, quality and composition of the trees, it generally is considered a farming business. You still have to count sales as income, not as capital gains, but you do have the tax advantages of a farm.

CRA's Interpretation Bulletin IT-373R2 "Woodlots" deals with the tax issues for owners and operators of woodlots, including woodlots operated as farms. It also discusses the criteria used by CRA to determine capital gains versus income treatment and eligibility for the capital gains exemption.

Determining the income tax treatment of timber sales from a property can, like most tax issues, be quite complex. It's best to talk with your accountant or tax advisor in advance about the tax implications of selling timber from your property.

Courtesy of tax specialist FBC.

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cord wood blades. Skate sharpener, chipper, blower, debarker, planer, circular sawmill, bandsaw mill, feller buncher (\$200,000.00). Used drum roll band saw sharpener (\$250.00). All types of saw blade sharpening equipment. 592 Talbot Ave., Winnipeg. Contact Norm at Dr. Saw (204) 667-6373 or see www.drsw.ca.

EQUIPMENT WANTED

Sawmill equipment and saw blades any size, shape and condition. If you want to sell/buy logs, lumber and sawmill equipment, we can provide you with contacts. 592 Talbot Ave., Winnipeg. Contact Norm at Dr. Saw (204) 667-6373 or see www.drsw.ca.

SERVICES

Manitoba hardwoods. Elm, ash, maple custom cutting with Wood-Mizer mill. Bob Gass, McCreary, (204) 835-2631.

Saw blade repair/sharpening. We roll, tension, straighten and balance saw blades (instead of hammering). All types

of saw blades and tools sharpened. Weld all types of carbide tip saws (Slasher and Feller Buncher teeth). 592 Talbot Ave., Winnipeg. Contact Norm at Dr. Saw (204) 667-6373 or see www.drsw.ca.

SAWLOGS WANTED

Interested in purchasing any type of saw log you have available. Contact Roger in Roseile at (204) 828-3386.

LUMBER FOR SALE

Timber Quota 41 cords softwood annual allowable cut \$4500. Call Len at 204-423-2180.

Hardwood lumber: oak, ash and basswood. Air dried. Various sizes and prices. Contact Roger in Roseile at (204) 828-3386.

MISC. FOR SALE

Two cases of mesh tree guards, with 500 per box. Price 20-cents per guard. Contact Barry at 204-423-2273.

WAM members advertise for free in Classifieds. Email wameditor@shaw.ca to place an ad.
