

THE MANITOBA WOODLOT

Issue Number 80

October/November 2009



Ken Fosty, right, takes a group through Ernie Gurica's woodlot on the October Fall Field Day. More photos of the Grandview and Beausejour field days on pages 6 and 7.

Good weather, turn-out for WAM Fall Field Days

The Woodlot Fall Field Days enjoyed a great turn-out this year, and the weather played no small part in it.

"This is one of the best falls we've had for attendance," said organizer Ken Fosty, who is a technician with the Manitoba Forestry Association Woodlot Program. "It's a great opportunity for people who are in the woodlot business to get together, and it's always interesting to see how other people manage their woodlots."

About 35 people turned out for the field day in September at Dan Mosquin's woodlot north of

Beausejour, and it was a perfect late summer day. With fall harvest pretty much completed, the Grandview field day at Ernie Gurica's woodlot near Grandview drew an even bigger crowd. About 45 people took in the talks and demonstrations, again under sunny skies.

The strong interest in woodlot management might well reflect the need for small woodlot operators to become less dependent on the big forestry companies that are struggling economically.

As Bob Austman from the Manitoba Model Forest

Continued on page 7

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.

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 2009 are as follows:

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Letter to the Editor

Willow biomass production a challenge

Dear Editor,

I've just read your article on Pete de Graaf's poplar/willow plantation in the August/September issue of *The Manitoba Woodlot*.

We know Pete and have spoken to him many times on willow, as we have been doing R&D into varieties and yield trials on willow for biomass with the help of an MRAC grant and the support of MAFRI, in particular Chris Reynolds of MAFRI's Manitoba Agro Woodlot Program.

Like Pete, we have had many trials and tribulations. However, the first plantation we planted in 2006 and coppiced in the winter of 2006/2007 does not really cause us any weed problems as we have canopy cover and so they are controlled. Even the trees that were harvested during the winter 2008/2009 for cuttings grew so quickly that, other than mowing a couple of times, we have not had to cultivate around them as they are well established.

However, when planting new cuttings, the weeds are a problem. Myself and my husband, along with our children when they have been home, have spent most of the summer hand-weeding around those cuttings that successfully germinated. My husband used both a tractor and cultivator as well as a garden tiller to weed between the rows, but that did not control the weeds between the plants in the rows.

Willow cuttings are planted in double-row spacing; the two rows making the double row are 2.5

Continued on page 10



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Notes from the woodlot

'Woody' woodpeckers destroying pines

By Lloyd Church

Between 1995 and 2000, I planted 300 Scots (or Scotch) Pines in my Anola woodlot. After protecting the trees from deer for ten years, Woody has decided it's his turn to destroy the trees.

Common Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Downy, Hairy and Three-toed woodpeckers now take over my Scots Pine plot in the spring each year. The Pileated and Red-headed woodpeckers have stayed out of the pines to date.

I've tried discouraging the birds with compact discs and grocery bags on the branches, along with shotgun blanks (no BBs), but they are only a one-hour deterrent.

It's amazing to see a bird peck a perfect six-inch band completely around a five-inch diameter pine in less than one hour! The pattern would be the envy of all grandmas who have knitted quilts.

Above the pecked-out band, the tree usually dies or breaks off at the band on a windy day. I expect my pine plot will all be gone in 3-5 years. That's too bad, because Scots Pines do exceptionally well in my area, growing 24-30 inches annually.

But to every story, there's a good side.

In the spring, before the bugs and flowers arrive, small birds such as warblers, finches and humming birds take advantage of the sugary sap left at the bands. Hundreds of these small birds are probably saved from dying during a late spring snow storm, thanks to Woody.

Good woodlot-ing, everyone. As for you, Woody, I'll give you the location of several Christmas tree growers once you've finished destroying my Scots Pine plot.

Note: People who were on the Forest Health field trip on September 12 were lucky to observe a Black-footed Woodpecker at work in Mike James's woodlot. It's the first I've seen.



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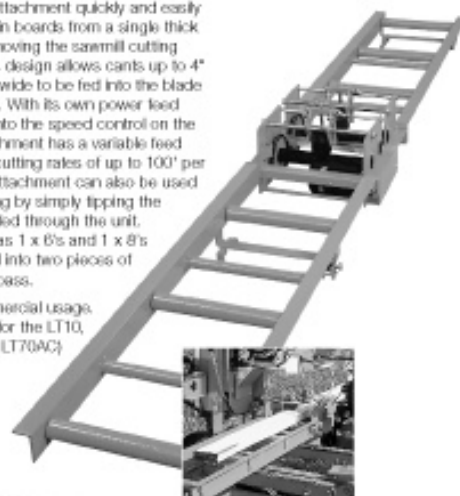
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Tour participants watch as Lyn Dunford ducks into the bush to look at some sickly shrubs in the understorey to see if any of them have visible fungal infections.

Photos by Allan Webb

Root rot, dwarf mistletoe and bugs on health tour

By Allan Webb

It was a parade of dwarf mistletoe, root rot and bug infestations on this fall's Forest Health Tour.

On September 12, ten WAM members met with Lyn Dunford, forest health specialist for Manitoba Forestry. Lyn took us to a variety of locations to examine fungal, insect and animal-caused damage on trees common to southern Manitoba woodlots.

We first looked at a tamarack and black spruce stand along Highway 304 north of Stead, examining examples of stem cankers and looking for larch sawfly damage and signs of mistletoe infections. Some edible and medicinal plants were found along with an abandoned beaver trap in a wet area.

After lunch at Mike James' woodlot near Grand Marais, Lyn showed us a collection of local forest insect pests in their various stages and examples of the damage they cause.

We walked the Manitoba Model Forest demonstration trail on the site to look at hypoxylon canker in aspen and to view damage caused by deer, rabbits and bear along the trail and in a recent plantation of jackpine. MFA woodlot technician Ken Fosty joined the group to talk



A gall on a young jackpine. Western gall rust is a fungal disease which infects young stem and branch tissue; the tree tries to isolate and smother the infected area by encapsulating it in the swollen gall visible in the picture.



about mushroom production.

Next we examined jackpine and white spruce along the edge of Grand Beach Provincial Park to see the parasitic plant dwarf mistletoe and witches' broom, a fungal infection which produces similar effects. Following that we drove several miles east on the North Star Trail, an old logging road, to view poplar borer damage and to examine young spruce and jackpines affected by white pine weevil, terminal weevil, root collar weevil and armillaria root rot. This was in a plantation established ten years ago to repair a site damaged by a forest fire and later salvaged by firewood cutting.

Lyn also talked about the spread of dutch elm disease and the introduction of new threats such as emerald ash borer and European gypsy moths.

The Woodlot Association would like to thank Lyn for her excellent presentation and Mike James for hosting us at lunch at his woodlot.

Woodlot Fall Field Days



Beausejour: Above, Stan Kaczanowski, regional forester for Manitoba Conservation – Forestry Branch, talks about fire-proofing around the yard. “It’s not rocket science. Where can sparks land on your property? That’s the issue.”

Below, Bob Austman, Manitoba Model Forest representative, hooks up his quad using a “skidding cone” which is designed to prevent the log from digging into the soil as it slides along, and it also keeps it cleaner so that the grit doesn’t dull down the saw blades.



Dan Mosquin, at his wood dryer. More on Dan’s Beausejour woodlot in the next issue.

Photos by Ken Fosty, Bob Austman, Garry Kennedy and Sheilla Jones



Beausejour: WAM president Len Riding enjoys the summery day.



Grandview: Above, Wayne Howart of Wood-Mizer Canada loads a big log onto the sawmill. Right, these are the results.



Beausejour: Before and after. Wood-Mizer's Wayne Howart shows how to square off a log. It is about to be cut into lumber.



Continued from page 1

noted, "It's the Mom and Pop operations that are making money right now."

Both field days featured a saw-milling demonstration by event sponsor Wood-Mizer, and a "walk 'n' talk" around each woodlot. However, the Beausejour event focused more on fire proofing and low-impact logging using an ATV.

In Grandview, more attention was paid to the business end of woodlot management. While the woodlot walk 'n' talk touched on a number of woodlot management objectives including wildlife enhancement, recreational opportunities, tree planting and non-timber forest products.

According to Fosty, "Landowners from across the intermountain and parkland regions of Manitoba learned about sustainable harvesting and had an opportunity to see trees transformed to lumber at Ernie Gurica's woodlot. Intermountain Conservation District once again partnered with us to make this field day a success. It was a fun-filled, informative day!"

Fall feeding festival for webworms

By Brad Gurr

The fall webworm is a gregarious fellow who likes to get together with friends and eat your prized ornamental or fruit tree.

Fall is the time of year when these caterpillars pitch their tents and throw a feast! However, with our climate the French name for these lepidopterans is *Chenille à tente estivale*; “worm who puts up a tent in the summer time” seems a bit pre-emptive.

Hyphantria cunea is common all over North America but in its most northern range, Canada, it manages to get in only one life cycle per year.

The insects over-winter in pupae attached to fallen leaves and emerge in the spring as adults. The adults mate and then the females lay their eggs on the underside of leaves, covering them with silken threads. The eggs hatch and the party begins, with web worms munching their way through foliage at an alarming rate.

While the caterpillars eat, they excrete silk to create a protective nest. They can often be seen grouped together in their nests early in the morning or on cold days.

Typically the host plants for these indiscriminate feeders includes apple trees, balsam poplars, choke cherries, pin cherries, trembling aspens, white ashes, white birches, white elms, and most willows. These insects rarely eat all the leaves on a tree and seem to enrobe only a branch or two for their harvest festival.

The damage is mostly cosmetic, especially when you consider that the trees have already reabsorbed some energy from the leaves and are within a few weeks of the leaves falling anyway.

If you have the stomach for it, you can remove the nest by hand or with snippers in the morning and eliminate the problem. The webworms are susceptible to a number of control methods, including insecticidal soap or a strong stream of water. Check the label on your product of choice or contact a professional to clean up these insects.

Cutting out the webs when the webworms are young is the preferred method of getting rid of them, then bag the webs and dispose of it all off-site.

A few hours in a black plastic garbage bag in the sun will eliminate any chance of them surviving. Just be sure to tie the bag tightly as the caterpillars will try to escape—as I found out when they set up shop in the trunk of my car! If you thing you have this gregarious group dining on your prized specimens, contact your Certified Arborist.

Brad Gurr is an I.S.A. Certified Arborist and Plant Health Care Specialist dedicated to the care and preservation of trees.

For more information on this subject or any plant health care related questions please feel free to contact him on-line at gurrb@yahoo.com.



Bob Gass

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—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.



Letter to the Editor

Working with willows

Continued from page 2

feet apart, the cuttings are two feet apart, and the double rows are five feet apart, giving a plant population of 5,000-6,000 trees per acre.

This form of planting is carried out world wide and many countries are using this crop to generate both power and heat. Many areas of the world have been doing this for 20 to 30 years successfully. However, here in Canada because as yet there has not been enough R&D to find out which varieties will successfully grow here, we are still hand planting, hand weeding and harvesting with brush saws—and in some places chain saws and other forestry equipment.

People in the rest of the world do not make cuttings but plant using a step planter, which takes willow rods and plants and cuts them to length in one operation. They then compact the soil and use a pre-emergent spray to control the weeds, followed by a post emergent spray when the weeds do eventually start to appear some six weeks later.

We are still hand planting, hand weeding

However, by this time, if the right variety has been planted, the willow growth should be above the weed growth so that a herbicide can be applied below the willow growth. The soil is not cultivated again if possible. Elsewhere they have discovered that cultivating the soil encourages weed growth.

Coppicing is done at the end of the first year growth with a cutter bar mower, and some weed control is required in the second year. Because the root system is established, the willows grow far quicker in the second year and are soon above the weed growth. When harvesting takes place, a forage harvester with an adapted head cuts and chips the trees in one operation.

Here in Canada, the lay-out used for willow by NRC Forest 2020 has been a triple row spacing,

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10


which is unique to Canada and for which none of the machinery built for willow biomass can be used. The costing on the Forest 2020 program worked on hand planting, hand weeding.

In 2006 when the program finished, the baler that they now use to harvest some of the willow did not exist, so harvesting must have been based on hand or small tool costs. These are not realistic for a commercial venture of five acres, let alone 100 acres.


Commercial-sized sites should be operated totally mechanically, and be able to utilize existing agricultural machinery and biomass cropping technologies.

As for the market, with a suitable furnace, houses can be heated by wood chips. Many areas where power stations are being converted or new ones are being built to use wood biomass require sustainable supplies which their own country cannot fulfill. For instance, Sweden produces five-million tons of wood pellets, but requires a further million to fulfill its needs.

Roger and Marie Haynes
Franklin, MB



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