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TREE FARM BULLETIN, May 2008

Greetings,

It's that time of the year again when Tree Farmers and other forest landowners should take time to think of the danger from wildfires to their forest and, if they live in the woods, what they need to do to protect their home from a wildfire.

The best defense against a wildfire destroying your forest is to actively manage it. Thinning will reduce crowding and increase the vigor of the remaining trees making it harder for fire to spread. Thinning can be done of smaller trees with limbs close to the ground which will help prevent a fire spreading into the crowns of trees. Lower limbs can be pruned from larger trees. Opening up a forest by thinning usually means an increase in understory vegetation which tends to stay green during the growing season. Green means moisture, so a ground fire will spread more slowly through a lush understory.

If a fire does spread through a managed forest it is more apt to be beneficial. Fire is one way that nature "cleans up" a forest so it can have many beneficial effects and lead to a more productive forest.

Closer to home, management needs to be directed more to protecting the structure. Most people that live in the woods are familiar with the term "defensible space" This involves planning what type of vegetation to have around your home. Many times, native vegetation can be replaced with herbaceous plants that stay greener and provide more protection from fire. Planning should also consider from what direction a fire is most likely to come from. Defensible space also involves maintenance. Dried vegetation should be removed, any flammable materials such as firewood should be stored away from structures, and gutters and roof areas should be kept free of debris that an ember could ignite. Defensible space also means ensuring that emergency vehicles can freely enter the site to combat a fire.

New Mexico State Forestry has a large amount of information on defensible space available if you would like to learn more (www.nmforestry.com). They can also assist you in developing a plan for your property. Enjoy your woods and pray for rain but be aware of what could happen if things dry out and be prepared.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TREES?

Where are the Eospermatopteris stumps to be seen? Some of them are in a roadside exhibit at Gilboa, New York. Others are in the New York State Museum at Albany.

How big are our National Forests? Their total area is 230 million acres. Within these are enclaves of private holdings, so the nation holds, in this respect, title to 180 million acres, or 9.5 percent of our country's land.

What is the dollar value of shade trees in the United States? The Division of Forestry Pathology (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture) estimates that the investment value of U.S. Shade trees is \$600 million.

What else do roots provide besides a great service to the living tree? Handsome smoking pipes from briar roots, tea and oil from sassafras roots. Southern pine stumps, which include the heavy crown roots, are used in certain fine chemicals as high-grade turpentine, pine oil, raw resins for adhesives, paints, textile finishing, soaps, cement, insecticides, phonograph records, varnishes.

How are established pests and diseases controlled? Indirect methods are used, such as, sound timber management practices; fire prevention (decay fungi enter trees through fire wounds); proper timing of cutting; control of stand composition for the mixture of trees; development and use of disease-resistant varieties.

Why do lower branches of trees gradually die? Normally because of lack of light. Without light, buds do not open. When buds die there are no leaves, and the cambium the length of the branch also dies. Other reasons for the death of branches are breaking by storms and attacks by fungi or insects.

Platt, Rutherford 1992. 1001 Questions Answered About Trees. Dover Books. 318pp.

