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TREE FARM BULLETIN, May 2009

Greetings,

On Wednesday, May 20th, about twenty-five Tree Farmers, foresters, and guests gathered at the 3,600 acre Pritzlaf Ranch, north of Las Vegas, for lunch and a walk in the woods. Sterling Grogan, New Mexico Project Manager, for the Biophilia Foundation owners of the Pritzlaf, gave a short introduction on the history of the ranch and how it was acquired by the Biophilia Foundation. Richard Pritzlaf purchased the ranch in 1934 and was famous for raising Arabian horses on the ranch. When he passed away in 1997 it was his wish that the ranch be protected and the forests restored to their historical condition. The ranch is typical of much private forest land in New Mexico which was harvested repeatedly in the past but with no forest management. Because of this lack of management the forests of the Pritzlaf had deteriorated to a point of low tree productivity, poor soils and water retention and loss of habitat. The Biophilia Foundation was formed in large part to fulfill that vision of restoration and has been working on the ranch to improve the forests.

It was then off to the woods. Champe Green, forest manager for the Pritzlaf, led the group on about a two-mile round trip of three thinning areas that have been completed within the last three years. In total the ranch has thinned about 645 acres to date. The ranch has little elevation range so is almost exclusively Ponderosa pine/Gamble oak habitat. The thinning contractor removed all commercial material and lopped and scattered the remaining logging slash. The result is a clean looking forest. Plans are to pass a prescribed fire through these thinned areas. The lopped slash helps to keep the ground cool, preserve moisture, reduce elk and deer grazing pressure, and lead to more plant growth; one of the goals of the thinning.

The two-mile hike gave everyone a good appetite to enjoy the catered lunch that followed. In closing the group had a round table discussion on the benefits of becoming involved in the Tree Farm program.

The New Mexico Tree Farm Committee would like to thank the Pritzlaf for hosting us and looks forward to more opportunities to share ideas and insights.



HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT TREES?

Did our kind of trees first appear on earth in Greenland? No. That is only the earliest record that has turned up. There is a valid theory that the familiar trees of northeastern United States such as elm, maple, oak, poplar were originally associated in woodlands in what is now northeastern India, near Darjeeling. During unknown millions of years they traveled from there across China, the Bering Straits, and formed a great circumpolar Forest around the Arctic Ocean. From there they spread southward into Europe and America. Their fossils, discovered in Greenland, are those of trees in the midst of their travels through the ages.

What kind of forests are in the Hawaii National Park? In the Kilauea-Mauna Loa volcano section of the park there is astonishing contrast because on the windward side of the 13,680-foot peak of Mauna Loa the trade winds bring about 100 inches of rain a year, and on the leeward side the rainfall is only 15 inches a year, while on the heights of the mountain colder temperatures influence the forest. On the dry lowland there is only barren lava with some brush and grass, while on the wet lowland there is a small rainforest with a candlenut tree (*Parmentiera obovato*), whose inflammable wood is used for fireworks by the natives, and screw pines, and Olapa. A half mile high on the rainy side are ohia trees (the most abundant and important tree in the park) and tree ferns. Still higher, around the mile elevation, are more ohia and koa and mamani. All these have tropical relatives in Central America. Above 7,000 feet the forest turns into cold-weather shrubs, but there are no come-bearing trees anywhere in the park. The cattle and goats were eating the young koa and mamani trees so that these rare and wonderful trees had almost disappeared when the National Park prohibited grazing. How the koa, at least, is making vigorous recovery.

What home trees are characteristic of California? California has an abundance of exotic trees that are difficult to surpass anywhere. The coastal strip is similar in climate to that of the Mediterranean and has come to be called the American "Riviera." Here, in particular, flourish some of the country's most beautiful trees. Among many interesting home trees are certain species of eucalyptus, cedar of Lebanon, camphor tree, jacaranda, California juniper, pepper tree, avocado, date palm, lilly-pilly, carob, deodar, lily-of-the-valley tree, almond, olive, and sweet shade.

Does tapping for maple sugar hurt the tree? Not if it is properly done. In pioneer days trees were tapped by "boxing." This gouged out a receptacle in the trunk to hold a pint or more of sap. Later the tapping-iron method made a slanting slice with an axe and a half-circle iron was driven in like a wedge to hold the spout. Both these methods seriously damaged the trees, but in those days there were so many maple monarchs that destruction of trees after a few years of sugaring didn't seem to matter.

What are alternate hosts? Some fungi lead double lives, living in one form on a certain kind of plant and in another form on a different plant. An example is the white pine blister rust which grows destructively on white pines at one time while another form of the same fungus grows on gooseberry bushes at another time. In this case, gooseberry is the alternate host of white pine blister rust.

What makes leaves and branches turn toward sunlight? This is primarily a chemical action, occurring when enzymes that stimulate growth are inhibited by light. This causes more cell elongation and division on the dark side of the twig and leaf stem than on the bright side. The growing cells push the twig or stem so as to bend it toward the light. In the same way a stem coming out of the seed will elongate in darkness. This operation can also be seen in potato runners that emerge from potato eyes in a dark cellar and seem to run after light.

