

# montana TREE FARM news

Fall 2019



Val Beebe proudly displays the collection of membership signs posted at the entrance to Birdsong Tree Farm.

## A Walk Through Birdsong Tree Farm with Val Beebe

By Betty Kuropat and Val Beebe; Photos by Betty Kuropat

“Plans to protect air and water are in fact... plans to protect man.”

- Stewart Udall

The first thing I notice as I approach Birdsong Tree Farm, near Kila, Montana, is the array of signs Val proudly displays. In the center, “Birdsong Tree Farm”, surrounded by “Certified Family Forest”, “Montana Forest Stewardship Program”, “Conservation Easement”, “S.H.A.R.E. Pollinator Partnership”, “Wild Bird Crossing”, and a classy green buckboard wagon. Signs on the neighbor’s fence along the drive, say “Smith Lake WPA” (Waterfowl Production Area). This part of the WPA is forested upland, but if I turn off the car, I can hear a cacophony of water birds in

the lake below. As I pull into the driveway, I’m greeted by a happy pack of dogs, some horses and donkeys leaning over the fence, and a beautiful white turkey strutting his spread tail. Val comes out and tries to wrangle them all to calmness. Some get to go along on the walk, not all.

Birdsong Tree Farm is 28 acres, mostly forested with ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and a few spruce. Chokecherry, serviceberry and black hawthorn shrubs are scattered throughout. A band of aspen groves along one edge struggle against deer browsing, conifer encroachment, and a lowering water table. As a registered site with the Montana Department of Agriculture, there are 32 hives of honeybees that make Birdsong their home May through October.

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## DENNIS SWIFT MEMORIAL Tree Farm Inspector Recognition Award

Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes the top Tree Farm Inspectors at the annual meeting. Many Montana Tree Farm Inspectors volunteer their time, equipment and vehicle use in promoting the Tree Farm System through their certification and inspection activity. Are you willing to support Montana Tree Farm Inspectors by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award?

YES, I would like to show my support in recognizing the importance of our Montana Tree Farm Inspectors in promoting the Tree Farm Program by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award. I have included a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make your check payable to Montana Tree Farm System and return it with this slip to:

Montana Tree Farm System, Inc.  
P.O. Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808-7276

The Montana Tree Farm System is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, and donations are tax deductible.

# Letter from the Chair: Winds of Change

Jared Richardson, Chair, Montana Tree Farm Program

There has been a chill in the morning air lately signaling our all too brief Montana summer is on its way out. It hardly felt like summer this year as the grass is still green in places, the temperatures never became unbearable and I only recall smelling smoke in the air for a couple of days. With the change in seasons comes the Annual Tree Farm Meeting and this year it is being hosted in Columbia Falls. We decided to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Montana Tree Farm by returning to our roots in the Flathead Valley where the first Tree Farms in the state began. The meeting will be hosted at the Cedar Creek Lodge in Columbia Falls and from there we will tour the Levert and Rose Tree Farms in the North Fork of the Flathead River. Lunch will be back at the Cedar Creek Lodge and Rick Trembath will discuss the Halfmoon Fire of 1929. We are looking forward to seeing everyone on October 5th in Columbia Falls, look for a flier in the mail very soon or visit our Facebook page for more information.

The Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee is happy to welcome Linda Smith to the role of Administrative Assistant; Linda replaces Bonnie Simpson who retired from the position earlier this year. Linda is based in the Flathead, knows many Tree Farmers, worked for the US Forest Service in the past and has been a great asset to the Steering Committee since joining us earlier this summer. Please be sure to say hello to Linda at the annual meeting in October.

Another change that has blown through the Montana Tree farm system this year is that Angela Wells has

left her position with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and is no longer the Certification Coordinator and DNRC liaison to Montana Tree Farm. No need to be alarmed however, as Angela has taken a position with the American Forest Foundation, the parent organization of ATFS, as the Western Region Tree Farm Manager. Angela provides support to Tree Farm steering committees in 9 Western states but continues to be based right here in Montana. Angela's affiliation with AFF on a national level has been a great benefit to Montana Tree Farmers as we have an advocate working for us directly with AFF leadership. Our membership can also still be assured that Montana DNRC will continue its commitments to serving our Steering Committee and members; Erik Warrington will be replacing Angela as the DNRC liaison.

Looking ahead to next year, 2020 marks the final year of the current ATFS Standards of Sustainability cycle. We will be seeing much more from AFF about what the 2021-2026 Standards will bring and what that means for you as members in the coming months. I look forward to learning more and will describe what it means to our membership as it is rolled out. Even though the Standards for Sustainability may change, one thing is certain: Montana Tree Farm remains committed to managing Wood, Water, Wildlife, and Recreation on family-owned forests. I look forward to seeing everyone in October at our annual meeting.

*Jared*

## Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee

Chair	Jared Richardson	Member	Scott Kuehn
Vice Chair	Holly McKenzie	Member	Ed Levert
Administrator	Linda Smith	Member	Pat Mandzak
Treasurer	Betty Kuropat	Member	Debra Parker Foley
Past Chair	Allen Chrisman	Member	Cindy Peterson
Member	Mike Christianson	Member	Peter Pocius
Member	Jim Costamagna	Member	Chris Town
Member	Skyler Hoefler	Member	Jim Watson
Member	Gary Johnson	Member	Cameron Wohlschlegel
		Ex-Officio	Angela Wells



Honey bees are among the many wildlife species that call Birdsong Tree Farm home.

Val bought the 3-acre house site, with room for the horses, 18 years ago. Two years later, she got and took the opportunity to buy the adjacent 25 acres of forest. More room for her and the animals, she thought. Little did she realize then how much work an overgrazed, weedy, neglected forest could be. Soon after, she got a scholarship from Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) to attend the Forest Stewardship for Loggers workshop. As an active member of MWA and dedicated environmentalist, she was skeptical about what was being promoted through the Forest Stewardship Program, but she is always willing to learn new things. She was so impressed by the workshop and the knowledge she gained that she enrolled in the landowner workshop and joined Tree Farm. She wanted to learn even more and wrote a management plan for her property. The primary management goals at Birdsong Tree Farm are to decrease weeds, increase tree and native plant diversity, and encourage more wildlife, especially birds.

With knowledge came responsibility. She started pulling knapweed with a vengeance. She pulled a lot! She wasn't making much progress. After four years, she finally acquiesced to spot spraying herbicide. It worked a little better and slowly she could see progress. She figured out pretty quick that until the weeds were fewer and grasses were more, there wasn't much opportunity for native plants to thrive. She got an ATV with a spray tank and also has used yellow toadflax and knapweed biocontrols (seed head weevils and root borers) on heavily infested slopes. Her multi-faceted approach to pest management models the Tree Farm Standards of Sustainability requirement

(Performance Measure 4.2) that landowners evaluate alternatives to pesticides in their management, and use those alternatives where practicable.

Oh, and then there's the trees. Some areas are so dense nothing, not even knapweed, can grow underneath. She noticed many of the ponderosa pine were dead and dying. With careful consideration for leaving snags, she began to thin these areas and remove some of the dead trees.

About five years after completing her management plan and investing a lot of sweat equity, Val placed a conservation easement on the property. The easement provides a crucial wildlife corridor and protects against roads, permanent structures, and subdivision. She has also started Birdsong Tree Farm-Family Forest Facebook page.

Today our walk begins up the hill from the house. It's hard to move very fast because of all the wildflowers in bloom that we try to name and check off the list. The Birdsong plant list has about 100 different species, including trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs. "What's that bird call?" "Which one? There are so many." With over 65 bird boxes in the forest and meadows, the bird list is generous with 33 species and counting. Wait a minute, Val's phone rings. She's on after-hours call. She's a pediatric nurse practitioner with a busy practice in Kalispell. She calms the mom and prescribes a remedy. Soon we begin to cross the upper slope where the knapweed biocontrols were released. There are knapweed plants, but scattered and few. Wow! The first time I saw this slope it was solid purple. Now it's native grasses and forbs.

Farther up the hill, we walk along a small ridge and into a draw with ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees of all sizes. "Walk" is the operative word. Last time I was here it was crawl over downed logs and squeeze between trees. There are still plenty of large down logs for wildlife habitat, and thanks to a windstorm, more than Val would have liked. She points out that some of the larger snags are still standing. For a dry ponderosa forest, this looks a lot happier and healthier than before.

We walk across the draw and as the aspect changes, Douglas-fir begins to dominate. Here Val has

purposely left the trees dense for wildlife cover against the adjacent open field. The stand is clumpy, with some dense areas and some open, grassy spots. There are deer beds everywhere in the grass. It's shady and cool.

As we descend toward the far edge of the property the trees become sparse and the grasses are lush. There are little fences where Val planted more than 1000 trees and shrubs and is trying not to feed them to the deer. She estimates only 5-10 percent survival because of grass competition, drought, and deer.

At the bottom of the slope she proudly shows me the aspen clone she fenced. It is amazing! The fence has only been up for two years and the regenerating aspens are 3-5 feet tall. There are a lot of them. There used to be none. The bark of the larger stems was constantly damaged, now they bark is healing. Those deer! Part of aspen restoration requires removing other trees from the clone. There are a few large ponderosa pines here that she didn't want to cut down. Instead, they are girdled to suffer a slow death and become valuable wildlife snags. Val accomplished the aspen restoration work with a special one-time grant from the DNRC (funded by the USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program). She contracted with the Montana Conservation Corp MCC to do the work.

Val has also used other grants to help accomplish work. She has used multiple Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) grants for noxious weed control and tree/shrub plantings. She had a 5-year grant under the Farm Bill that allowed her to pay for weed control, cleaning up downed barbed wire fences, shrub plantings, and pollinator plantings. There is a dedicated pollinator garden near the house and horse corral, as well as plantings scattered through the property. The grant required annual accomplishment and report. Worth it.

The horses and donkeys still don't freely graze, and probably never will. Instead, they get escorted to a fenced corner of the neighbor's grassy field that someday may become part of Birdsong.

We walk back toward the house, past the aspen stand along the road. We stop at the teepee for a snack and drink of water that Val has stashed in a cooler there. A robin is nesting in a hanging flowerpot. Inside the teepee is a display board that she uses for tours and talks with schools and other groups that visit, like Montana Native Plant Society and Flathead Land Trust members, and an Earth Day booth. The display talks about and shows photos of Birdsong Tree Farm; history, management goals, news articles, and some philosophy.



Val Beebe used a special two-tiered fence design to discourage browsing animals from entering the aspen grove she is trying to restore.

“Unless we are willing to encourage our children to reconnect with and appreciate the natural world, we can't expect them to protect and care for it.”

- David Suzuki ♦



# montana TREE FARM system



## You're Invited!

Montana Tree Farm's Steering Committee cordially invites you to join the statewide Annual Tree Farm Meeting. The event kicks off with coffee and pastries at the Cedar Creek Lodge followed by two Tree Farm field tours. Transportation will be provided. The tours will be followed by lunch, a silent auction, and a short business meeting.

**Tree Farm Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, October 5, 2019**

**8:00 am to 2:30 pm**

**Cedar Creek Lodge off Hwy 2; Columbia Falls, Montana**

To register, simply fill out the form below.

Mail the form along with a check for registration to:

Montana Tree Farm Program

PO Box 17276

Missoula, MT 59808

For Questions Please Call 892-4141 or e-mail [glynholly@gmail.com](mailto:glynholly@gmail.com)

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### Montana Tree Farm Annual Meeting Registration Form

Saturday, October 5th, 2019

Registration form and \$25 fee per person (\$12.50/person for 16 years of age and under) are due to Montana Tree Farm by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Attendance limited to 100. Pre-registration required.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone : \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch will include: BBQ Pork and Smoked Chicken, buns, baked beans, coleslaw, potato chips, served with BBQ sauce, hot sauce, pickles, and cherry crisp. Lemonade or Tea / Coffee.

Number of persons attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*If tour is filled, late applicants will be notified as soon as possible.

BECOME A PROJECT LEARNING TREE EDUCATOR!

# PLT & Tree Farm

## *“a natural fit”*



**When:** Saturday, Oct 4th, 2019

1:00 – 4:00

**Where:** McKenzie Tree Farm in  
Columbia Falls, MT



Project Learning Tree (PLT) is an award-winning environmental education program that uses the forest as a ‘window on the world’ to understand our complex environment, to stimulate critical thinking and to make informed decisions.

### Benefits Include:

- The PLT Early Childhood Guide with music c.d. plus the k-8 PLT Guide with 96+ ready-made Environmental Education lessons
- Meets National and Montana curriculum standards
- Includes background info & lessons
- Go home with a goody bag kit to teach 10 of these lessons on your own Tree Farm!!

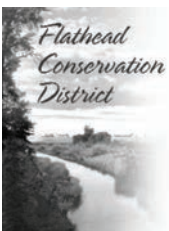
**FREE enrollment and Snack:** A grant from Montana Women in Timber provides P.L.T. activity guides, s’mores, & materials.

**Contact Info:** Holly McKenzie at 407-1591 or [glynholly@gmail.com](mailto:glynholly@gmail.com)

### How to Register

Please submit registration by October 2, 2019 or RSVP

Sign up to attend with an RSVP or downloading a form at <http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/calendar.htm>



The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.

# MARY NAEGLI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes a deserving college student with an interest in forestry and who is a resident of Montana with an academic scholarship. At the 2017 Montana Annual Meeting, the membership unanimously approved a recommendation to name the scholarship the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship after long time Tree Farm member Mary Naegeli. Would be willing to support the Montana Tree Farm System by contributing to the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship?

Photo at right: Mary Naegeli, a long-time Montana Tree Farmer, former steering committee member, and strong advocate for long-term land stewardship poses with her son Bill and Inspector Everett Young, proudly displaying her Forest Stewardship sign.



YES, I would like to show my support in promoting the Tree Farm System by contributing to the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship.

I have included a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please make your check payable to Montana Tree Farm System and return it with this slip to:

Montana Tree Farm System, Inc.  
P.O. Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808-7276

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## 2019 Montana Tree Farm Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship Recipients

By: Cindy Peterson, MSU Extension Forestry

The MT Tree Farm Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship is awarded each year in the amount of \$500. In 2019 the amount was increased to \$1,000, as there were two very qualified candidates and the executive committee decided it would be beneficial to award two scholarships. Following are profiles of the recipients e following is a little about the recipients Aiden McCloy and Sam Wilson. Congratulations to Aidan and Sam and best wishes in your future careers! The deadline for applying for the 2020 scholarship in the amount of \$500 is April 1, 2020 <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/montana-awards-and-scholarship>

### Aidan McCloy

Growing up in Montana provided Aiden McCloy with opportunities to learn and experience first-hand some of the work that natural resource management involves. During his freshman year in high school, his family started to invest in the long-term health of his grandfather's timber properties, which included a 24-acre stand outside of Columbia Falls and a 78-acre timbered stand in Stevens County, Washington.

Aiden says, "Through the course of my involvement in his family's Tree Farm property in the Flathead Valley, I experienced first-hand the process of a timber harvest. I continue to build on this foundation. Initially, I joined my Mom as she interacted with timber representatives and made management plans. I can clearly remember my first time out to survey



the timber and fill in plot forms. Peering up into the tree tops trying to distinguish spruce from fir proved difficult. I couldn't differentiate between the scaly bark of a spruce and the furrowed bark of a Douglas fir. Rick Moore from the DNRC was very helpful early on as he instructed me on tree identification, basic chainsaw safety, and thinning techniques for young stands. In 2016 and 2017, I was able to learn about different the timber management approaches as both properties were harvested. In the Flathead, because of previous blowdown, the harvest took all mature spruce and a significant number of lodgepole to avoid future blowdown and to encourage multi-story growth. I walked the timber on the second day of the harvest with his mom and Mark Boardman from Stoltze Lumber. Mark also gave us a tour of Stoltze Mill, an opportunity to learn more about mills and their history in Montana. The next year, in Washington, a seed cut was done to eliminate root rot in the Douglas fir population and encourage larch regeneration."

"At about the same time, I joined a volunteer trail crew facilitated by Big Sky Bible Camp and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation for two-week stints over the next three years. Upon graduating high school, I worked on a state fire crew stationed out of Clearwater Junction. I understanding of forest management increased working under FMO Cory Calnan and Unit Foresters Cindy Super and Brad French. The skills I learned on trail and fire crews will be helpful when it comes time to thin new growth on our family timber as it regenerates. Looking back, I am surprised and thankful at the amount I have learned over the last five years. One thing I have learned is that forest management is a multi-generational endeavor. My grandfather was a forester who understood the value of forested land, and I am proud to continue the tradition of caring for our family properties as a fourth generation manager in Washington and a third generation manager in Montana."

### **Samuel Wilson**

Samuel Wilson is currently enrolled in the Franke College of Forestry at the University of Montana, getting a Bachelors in Ecosystem Sciences and Restoration, Fire Science Minor, and a Certificate in GIS. Sam has worked in natural resource

management for the past nine seasons and currently works for the U.S. Forest Service as a wildland fire crew member on the Nine Mile Ranger District in Huson, MT.

Sam says, "University coursework and summer employment experiences have made him aware of the many values and services our forest ecosystems provide for humans. My awareness has increased by performing my senior project, monitoring whitebark pine (WBP) habitats. Government agencies frequently use prescribed fire to create suitable WBP habitat because it is relatively cheap and easy to treat large areas. However, little is known regarding its effects on WBP and their habitat. My group completed a fourth-year post monitoring study of WBP habitat where prescribed was used to create suitable habitat in the Mission Mountain Wilderness, on the Flathead National Forest. By participating in this project, I came to appreciate the many services WBP provides for its ecosystems and the animals that live within them. My experience in direct wildland fire suppression has placed me in situations where I have been involved with triaging homes before a fire front and on occasion, I have had to leave houses with minimal protection because you would need much time to remove all the vegetation that was a threat to the house. On the opposite end of the spectrum, I have taken part in thinning projects in the Nine Mile Valley wildland-urban interface (WUI). These projects reduce flammable woody fuels in the WUI, creating a more sustainable relationship between humans and forests."

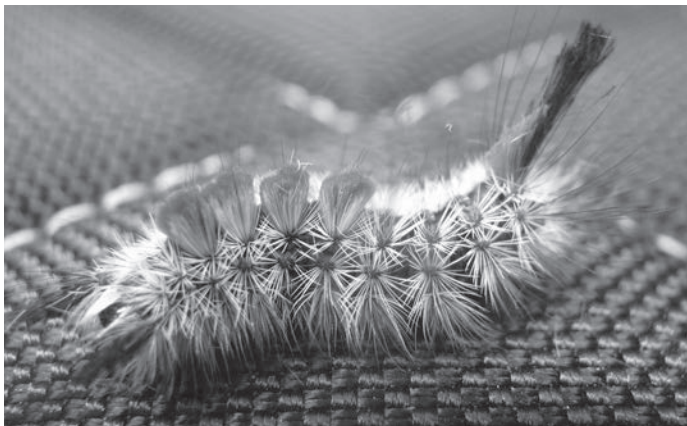


"These experiences have convinced me of the need for proper forest management. As a result, I have developed a passion for making my career goals revolve around natural resource management." ♦

# Douglas-fir Tussock Moth in Western Montana

By Amy Gannon, Montana DNRC Forestry

Douglas-fir tussock moth has created an uncommon spectacle on the hillsides around Missoula. While this moth causes periodic damage in many parts of western MT, it rarely causes widespread damage in the forests surrounding Missoula. This year, however, was remarkably different with large, red patches of damaged Douglas-fir evident on Mount Dean Stone, Black Mountain, Pattee Canyon and up into the Rattlesnake. The outbreak may have seemed to come on quickly but had likely been active for the previous year or two without much notice. Interestingly, Douglas-fir tussock moth commonly damages the tops of ornamental Colorado blue spruce in town just prior to an outbreak in the surrounding forests. This pattern of damage was observed in Missoula and other communities, lending a precursor to this outbreak. Surveys are currently underway to determine the extent of the outbreak and estimate how much longer the outbreak may last. Idaho is experiencing a fairly large-scale outbreak as well.



Douglas-fir tussock moth larvae. Photo by: Cody Caulum

It is certainly not unusual to see tattered Douglas-fir in western Montana but generally, western spruce budworm is the culprit. Western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir tussock moth overlap in many places and even occur on the same tree. Sometimes loopers get into the mix as well and there can be more than three species of moth and butterfly caterpillars feeding in a stand. While western spruce budworm is broadly distributed throughout the state including Red Lodge, Bozeman, Big Sky, Helena, Butte, Lincoln and Glacier National Park, Douglas-fir tussock moth's range is fairly limited. The female Douglas-fir

tussock moth does not fly; therefore the population can only disperse as far as the caterpillars can travel. Historically, outbreaks have been limited to Missoula (although not likely at the current magnitude), Plains, Flathead Lake, Mission Valley, Kalispell and Columbia Falls. Typically, outbreaks last for approximately three years then suddenly crash when lethal viruses build up in the population. But in the meantime, they can cause significant damage to pure stands of Douglas-fir and understory regeneration. Some of this damage is purely aesthetic, leaving trees an unsightly brown. In some situations, subsequent years of severe defoliation can outright kill trees or predispose them to Douglas-fir bark beetle.

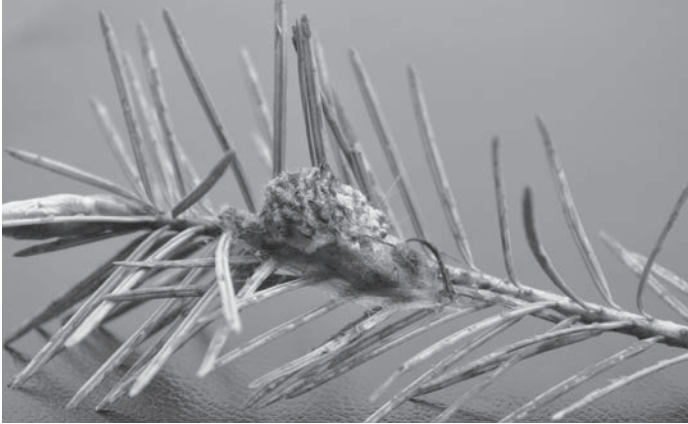


Douglas-fir tussock moth damages to Colorado blue spruce near Kalispell. Photo by: August Kramer

The caterpillars, or larvae, strip trees as they feed on the new foliage and give the trees a distinct red-brown hue. Douglas-fir tussock moth larvae can feed on both old and new foliage and are generally cleaner feeders than western spruce budworm. Abundant silk drapes trees as they feed and commonly entangles recreationists as they move through an infested stand. The feeding does not outright kill the tree but does reduce its capacity to photosynthesize and produce food. Healthy, vigorous trees can rely on past years of nutrients stored in the root system to thrive whereas younger trees or those that are stressed by overcrowded conditions are often killed by severe or repeated defoliation.

Douglas-fir tussock moth defoliation looks fairly similar to the damage caused by the western spruce

budworm. The insects themselves, however, are quite easily distinguishable. Douglas-fir tussock moth caterpillars are extremely hairy with notable “tussocks” of hair along their back, looking something like a mohawk. These hairs can be a nuisance of their own causing tussockosis, an ailment of the respiratory system or skin irritant. Western spruce budworm caterpillars are smooth-bodied with pairs of cream colored dots along their back.



Douglas-fir tussock moth egg mass. Photo by: August Kramer

If the damage caused by Douglas-fir tussock moth is intolerable, landowners have options to directly suppress populations by killing the caterpillars with an insecticide. Insecticides must be applied when the larvae are at their most susceptible stage which is

generally in early summer while the insects are still young and actively feeding. Certain chemicals will kill all invertebrates in the stand whereas biological control (such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, Btk) has a narrower spectrum and only affects moths, butterflies and skippers. Insect growth regulators can also be used to interfere with the larval development (such as Dimilin). Read the label of your desired product for exact dose, rate, and timing.

Active forest management offers the best long-term solution and promotes resiliency against a broad array of insects and diseases including both Douglas-fir tussock moth and western spruce budworm. Thinning stands will not necessarily deter defoliation, but it will afford the residual trees more of an opportunity to rebound once the outbreak subsides. Furthermore, this strategy is an effective way to manage diverse tree species amongst a variety of common stressors: drought, bark beetles, root disease, etc.

For more information on Douglas-fir tussock moth and other insects and diseases in Montana forests, please refer to the DRNC’s Forest Pest Management Program website. Here you will find specific information on our most common forest insects and diseases along with links to identification and management guides. ♦



We are celebrating Montana Forest Products Week starting October 20th, join the fun! The Montana Legislature established this week in 2011 to honor our forest products industry and its important work: providing needed resources to humanity, stewardship of our forests, and supporting our economy.

Forest Products week 2019 will run from October 20th-26th.

A calendar of state wide events will be available on the state Forest Products Week website: (<https://bit.ly/2IMlIAj>), check it for events near you.

Montana Tree Farm News  
TREE FARM PROGRAM  
PO Box 17276  
Missoula, MT 59808

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Publication Managing Editor: Angela Wells  
Publication Design Editor: Lorie Palm

Other than general editing, the articles appearing in this publication have not been peer reviewed for technical accuracy. The individual authors are primarily responsible for the content and opinions expressed herein.

According to a 2015 survey of our network, the visit with an inspector once every five years is one of the most valuable aspects of being a Montana Tree Farm member.

Email us if you think you are due for Tree Farm recertification:

[montanatreefarmssystem@gmail.com](mailto:montanatreefarmssystem@gmail.com)

