

Trees are important

Farm woodlot assistance available

By Wendy Thomson

It's hard to imagine Ontario as a forest, yet that's what it was over a century ago before pioneering began. Settlers cut much of the timber to clear the land for crops.

Now, most farmers realize that a woodlot stocked with valuable

trees is an asset to a farm, a crop in itself. Almost all farms in this area have some land which cannot be cultivated, but which can be planted in trees. The majority of already existing farm woodlots in Ontario need improvement. When the owner himself does not have the knowledge of the value and uses

of the various species and the management of them, he can apply for assistance under the Woodlands Improvement Act. Under this, landowners may qualify for tree planting and woodland improvement work. The landowner pays for nursery stock to be planted, which he must protect from fire, insects,

and grazing. Quite aside from the direct benefits to property owners, such as cash returns for quality logs, wood for his own use, and improvement to his property (therefore value increase), work under the W.I.A. indirectly benefits the whole community. A community with a good

proportion of wooded hills and forest growth is not so subject to damage by high winds and extreme floods.

Need forest

The Ontario Royal Commission on Forestry reported that "For maintenance of water levels, prevention of erosion, soil drifting, etc., European authorities argue that not less than 20 per cent of the land surface should be under forest."

In Halton, the percentage of farm area in woodland dropped from 12.1 per cent in 1921, to 10.4 per cent in 1968.

Much of this is no doubt due to the Private Land Extension Service or the 1968 Woodlands Improvement Act in which the Minister of Natural Resources helps landowners to plant trees on their properties and improve their woodlands. Any owner of five or more acres of land (not counting buildings) can apply.

In other cases, landowners can receive advice on how they themselves can improve their woodlots. The district Forester can also refer them to the local Conservation office for planting smaller areas, such as windbreaks. Mike Pratchett, local resource technician, says "There's all kinds of assistance available if people would just ask!"

The Cambridge Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources (of which this area is a part) brought 2,181 acres under agreement in 1971-72, 738 acres in woodlot improvement and 878 acres reforested.

Under their extension service, 225 landowners received advice on planting, and 178 were advised on office management. A total of 1,454 calls were received in 1971-72.

The object of woodlot management is to obtain a full stand of valuable trees in a shorter period of time than would develop under natural conditions.

Every woodlot, no matter what size, could be operated according to the owner's objectives, the size

and condition of the woodland, marketing opportunities for woodlot products, and availability of capital and labor for development.

Give advice

When the local management forester is contacted, and inspection is made, advice is given on condition, protection, and cutting. The planned cutting of trees actually helps to maintain a healthy woodlot. Within a few years there will be practically no sign of disturbance.

The cutting of these trees creates openings in a forest stand, and young growth gradually fills in these openings. This condition is favorable to wildlife.

Hardwood stands that have had no previous management usually contain many defective and undesirable trees that should be cut. The thinning of a stand involves cutting trees to stimulate growth and improve the quality and composition of the rest of the stand. Thinnings may be advisable as often as every 10 years on the advice of the management forester.

Two points of interest—many farmers run cattle in woodlots for whatever browse they can pick up. The stock destroy seedlings and saplings, and many farm woodlots have no small trees coming up to replace the older trees which, in heavily pastured woodlots, die out. There are thousands of acres reforesting naturally in southern Ontario since many farmers have fenced their cattle out; but at least one-half of the woodlots in counties with low percentages of woodland are pastured. Many of these will disappear if pasturing is continued.

Tree cutting laws

Second point, when a landowner is thinking of clearing out a woodlot or selling timber, he should be aware, by law, he cannot cut trees under 6" on diameter. Indiscriminate clearing of



WOODLOT EXPERT inspects a nearby hardwood bush for seedlings which need encouragement. —W. Thomson Photo



ANOTHER WRINKLE woodlot people use is stacking of brush to make cover for rabbits and other small animals who thrive in the forest. —W. Thomson Photo



EMPLOYEES OF THE MINISTRY of Natural Resources thin out a woodlot to encourage the growth of better hardwood trees. They reach for the winter sky in a vertical mosaic, and will one day be marketed. —W. Thomson Photo

substantial acreages of woodland around the headquarters of streams in southern Ontario have already caused the lowering of water tables, and never-falling wells have gone dry.

Advice on all phases of woodlots and planting, and on specific

situations such as swamp hardwoods, shallow soil, etc. can be obtained by contacting the local district office of the Ministry of Natural Resources or Division Forests, Ministry of Natural Resources, Parliament Buildings, Toronto 5, Ontario.

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