

Of course they don't. Only a few survive. In fact, a seed, if it's to grow and prosper, needs a lucky break of some kind or another in order to get started. If a seed floats down and lands on an old stump, for example, that's a lucky break because now the seed is up off the crowded forest floor and the seedling will not have to fight for open space and sunlight. A moss covered rock will serve the same purpose but a rock often proves traitorous in the end.

As I moved north along two ridges the other day a blow-down jammed the trail. A thick cluster of branches extended from a large rock on the right edge well into the bush across the trail.

The rock was to blame. It was five feet across, seven feet to the ground on one side and five on the other. It was, or at least had been, cuddled in a thick green blanket of moss about two inches thick. Into this moss, some ten years ago, fell seeds from white spruce, hemlock and yellow birch.

Bedded in the moss, moist and warm, the seeds grew and in the early years growth was no doubt quite rapid. But then the trouble started. The tiny roots, spreading and searching, found solid rock in all directions. Reaching frantically for food and anchorage the roots pushed across the rock and down the sides to soil - and life. None of them were more than an inch thick and some had seven feet of their length exposed.

In this manner the trees continued to grow. Eventually a spruce, a hemlock, and a yellow birch topped twenty feet and three smaller saplings, one of each kind, sprang up under them. But it could not go on. Their grip was too tenuous to cope with that kind of leverage and finally over they went onto the trail.

They took with them the three saplings and peeled the rock bare of moss with their web of roots. So today, for the first time in perhaps fifteen or twenty years, the rock stands bare.

By the time you read this, nature will have begun the whole process again - infinite patience, infinite future, finite but infinitesimal change - until, someday, the rock will

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