

A VIEW FROM THE WOODS

Cedar Theft

The Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* L.) is an important tree species in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. It provides fence poles and posts, construction timber, and of course, landscape stock. The cedar is ideally suited to the shallow, imperfectly drained soils found throughout much of Grenville county. It is often the first tree species to inhabit agricultural fields that have been removed from crop production.

With the boom in residential and commercial construction in the past few years, the demand for landscaping has greatly increased. Cedar is a popular landscape tree. This has led to a creation of a whole new industry based on the removal of naturally grown seedlings from rural properties in Eastern Ontario. Most of the activity is legitimate, but there are some operators who would rather steal the stock than purchase it. Not only do these thieves damage the natural cedar resource, but they tarnish the reputation of legitimate operators.

Legitimate operators may approach landowners and attempt to negotiate a deal for the purchase of seedlings. MNR field staff are available to advise landowners on the number of trees that can be removed from a field without affecting the future potential of the young stand. Landowners are advised to ensure that all sales contracts are in writing. Contracts should include a clause to cover compensation for damage to fields, roads and remaining trees.

Areas that are most susceptible to theft are those that are accessible by road, yet removed from main travel corridors. The thieves strike either in the early morning or evening, when they are unlikely to encounter people. Landowners who have fields of cedar that are isolated may wish to institute early morning and late evening patrols during the months of April and May. Neighbours can also be recruited to keep watch on isolated fields. Licence plate numbers of suspicious vehicles should be taken and reported to the OPP as soon as possible.

To discourage thieves, landowners can post their land with No Trespassing signs and symbols (solid red circles, 10 cm in diameter, posted in clearly visible locations).

In 1988, an individual was caught in the act, charged, convicted and ordered by the court to pay the landowner restitution plus a significant fine. If more of these thieves are caught and prosecuted, it may act as a deterrent for others.

This article has been presented by the Private Land Forestry staff at the Brockville District office of the Ministry of Natural Resources. If you have any questions on this or any other resource related topic, contact the MNR office nearest you.

STRAW BERRIES

(Pick your own and prepicked)

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THOUSAND ACRE ROAD
R.R. #3 PORTLAND

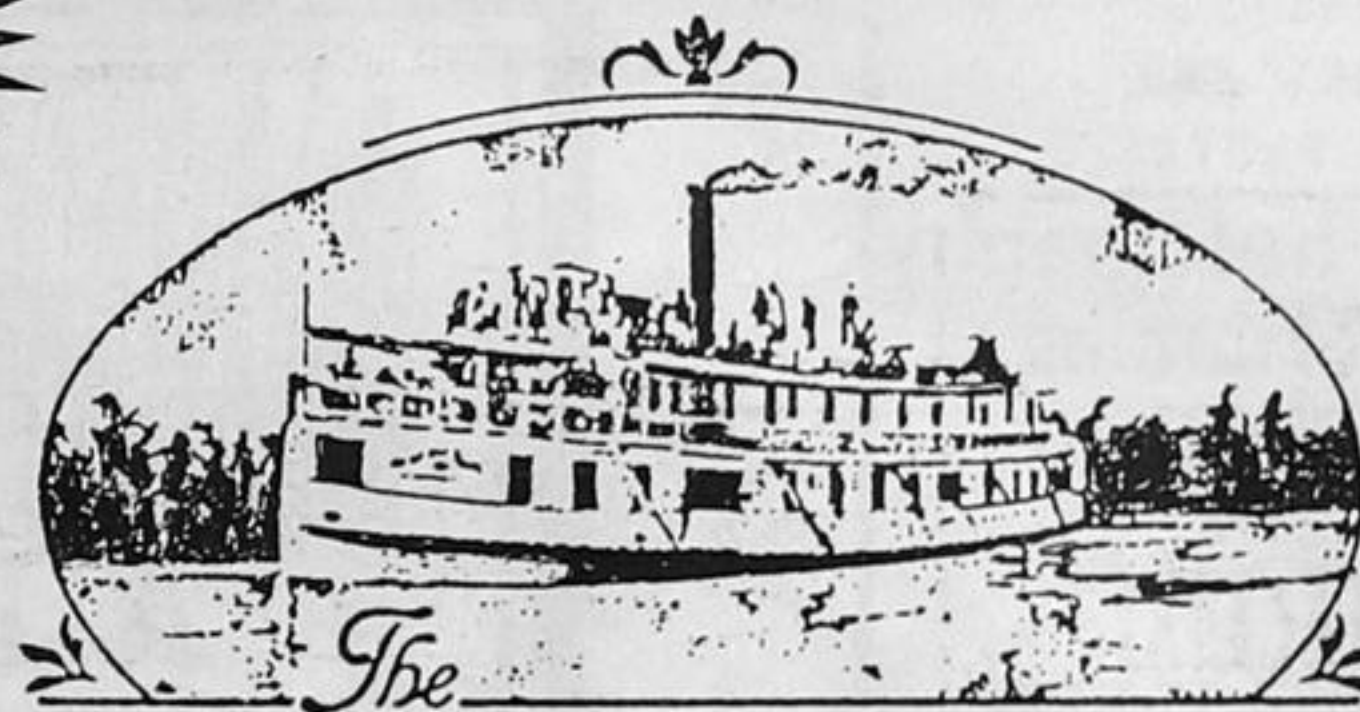
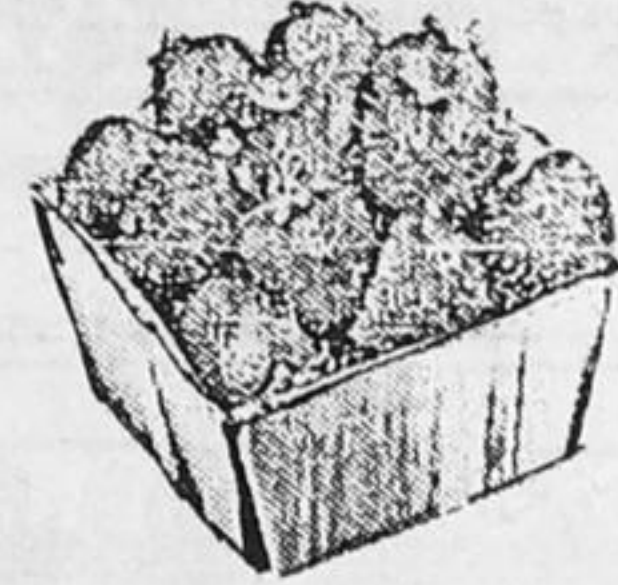
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