

The Ontario

Woodlander

Promoting Forest Stewardship

Issue 102, March 2021

**Edible Wild
Plants...
Available
Everywhere**



**Making Maple
Syrup for the
First Time**



**Harbingers
of Spring**



**Hot Tea on
a Cold Day**



**Edible Wild
Delicacies
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- Brant County Woodlot Owners' Assoc.
- York/Durham Chapter
- Stormont Dundas & Glengarry
- Lanark & District Chapter
- Huronia Woodland Owner's Assoc.

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Cover Photo: Fiddleheads—the furred fronds of young Ostrich ferns are a delicious and nutritious spring wild edible. These are about 24 to 48 hours past their prime for eating, but we kept the photo as it is such a beauty! Photo Credit: Simon Lunn, Lanark and District Chapter.

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President's Message

By Paul Robertson, Niagara Chapter



Our December 2020 issue of *The Ontario Woodlander* resonated well with our membership, and I am pleased to say it also garnered us some new members. In several conversations about what it was that made the 101st issue so popular, it became clear to me that many found it helpful and practical to their particular interests and needs. In this day and age of abundant, perhaps a plethora, of easy to access information, it turns out that much of it does not really help or even make sense unless it focuses in on where the reader is at with respect to their own level of knowledge and understanding. Upper Trent Valley member Matt DeMille, who has contributed a wonderful article in this issue about his family's experiences producing maple syrup for the first time said it well in an email to me, and I quote him directly as well as paraphrase him below:

"A lot of available information is not relevant for beginners and it gets confusing when 'purists' or commercial operations start debating the proper techniques and the science. I hope my article helps people wade through all of the noise and just lets them get started. Once they get started, they will find their own way and probably even chart a different path than our family. That is the beauty of it—there is not an exact way to do it, even if that is the initial impression of most."

This type of information and information sharing will be increasingly important for the OWA to embrace—the simple 'how-to' in a working forest scenario. We are an organization of mentors and mentees, and many of the Chapters still embody this all-important relationship. The reality, however, is that more people are looking beyond in-person ways to transfer knowledge. They are looking to the internet for on-demand information. But many are not looking for words or to compile information from dozens of sources; they are looking for one-stop mentorship and guidance, preferably in video or photo form, because that is what helps replace the person-to-person mentorship when visual learning is still king. This demand has of course been accelerated by COVID. Ultimately what people are seeking does not necessarily have to come from a position of expertise or from someone with formal training,

but more from a position of interest, and from what people have learned themselves often through trial and error. It is through personal exploration of a topic based on observation and hands-on effort. We need to give people the tools—not just 20-year-old written resources, but personal experiences about woodlot ownership that fosters a sense of community among all that want to give it a try!

The OWA has a very unique niche in this arena. As urbanites and retirees (boomers) increasingly take-on rural woodlot ownership without much expertise or background, they will be looking for guidance. That is us! This can be through Chapters, but there also needs to be some centralization of how this engagement occurs at the provincial level. I see that shift happening in grassroots-based organizations, and even within OWA as I have become more involved. To survive and even thrive, the OWA will need to move beyond being volunteer driven for operations. Volunteers can remain an important mechanism to feed the information and communication machine, but it needs to be orchestrated by dedicated full-time staff.

From a strategic planning perspective, the changes that will be required for a membership-based organization like the OWA to survive long-term are going to require transformative change. This will be uncomfortable for some but doing it right will mean sustainable growth. This will not happen overnight either but starting to guide it early through robust strategic planning will be key to organizational sustainability. No organization is immune to the landscape changing around them. How we respond to it will determine what the future holds. 🌱

Test Your Knowledge Quiz #26

1. What part of a dandelion can be eaten?
2. Where do wild leeks grow best in Ontario?
3. Are morel mushrooms edible or poisonous?

Executive Director's Note

By John Pineau, Near North Chapter



Yet another issue of The Ontario Woodlander is hitting pleasantly close to home for me. Since childhood near Peterborough, I have been fascinated by edible wilds, and in trying different 'organic matter' that can be foraged from forest and field for sustenance. And I was not alone in this hobby; you will notice an article by my older brother Michael a few pages ahead. He was and is a much better field naturalist and biologist than me, and I will give him full credit for being both a patient mentor and positive influence (most of the time). I can remember trying all kinds of different wild plants, berries and nuts at his urging including but not limited to dandelion, cattail, fiddleheads, gooseberries, beaked hazelnuts, elderberries, grapes, leeks, and an assortment of mushrooms. He was always well-informed and careful, having collected several excellent books on wild edibles, including by the guru of the time—Euell Gibbons, who famously touted grape nuts cereal in a TV commercial as reminding him of the taste of wild hickory nuts.

There are so many stories to tell of our youthful edible wilds exploits, but I will only cover two in the interest of brevity. One of my favorites is an attempt to make dandelion wine when I was about 11 years old. Not being a particularly detail-oriented person, I made a cursory scan of the recipe in one of our books and set about to make the wine using the stems (not the flowers as it should have been), mixed with granulated sugar and too much yeast. The concoction that resulted was bitter and potent, and if consumed in any quantity would cause what I will politely describe as intestinal issues. It did however literally catch fire if exposed to flame! Later attempts at dandelion wine were much improved I am happy to say. I can still remember Michael telling me that I needed to use the flowerheads. That did sink in by about the third batch.

Our attempts to make wild leek soup were nothing short of spectacular, and even thinking about it now makes my mouth water. There were some well-stocked patches of leeks that we found, including one in the back part of a forested property of hardwoods with a south facing slope, where we should not have been harvesting. In the interest of not raising anyone's ire, even to this day its location will remain secret.

The recipe which I share below included an optional amount of cooking sherry; and our mother kept some on hand in the pantry. We of course decided that to make the soup 'really good', we would increase the amount of sherry called-for in the recipe. I can still see my mom's disapproving countenance as we emptied the entire contents of the bottle into our first batch. We were a little more temperate with future batches.

This all put me in good stead when I worked as a park naturalist in Northern Ontario during my late teens and early twenties. I loved to lead edible wilds hikes, and present slideshows on the same theme. I even organized edible wild food events and offered campers the chance to try all sorts of different forage including donated wild game. I doubt such would be allowed today given liability issues, but those were more relaxed and yet heady times, when just doing something cool was allowed without too much critique or question; safety was often secondary.

This issue will be a great primer for some and will certainly catalyze interest in foraging in our forests and woodlots. For others it will undoubtedly provide some new and useful information on the same. Whatever your level of knowledge, always be careful, and make sure you know exactly what you are trying out there! There is much that is delectable, but a few are deadly... 🍄

Fabulous French Wild Leek Soup Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 cup of butter
- 4 cups of diced wild leeks
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 4 slices dark rye bread
- 2 slices Swiss cheese, diced
- 4 tablespoons dry cooking sherry (or more)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cans of consommé soup
- Add salt and pepper to taste
- 4 slices provolone cheese
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Melt butter with olive oil in a suitably sized stock pot on medium heat. Add leeks and continually sauté and stir until tender and somewhat translucent. Do not brown the leeks.
2. Add consommé, sherry, and thyme. Add salt and pepper to taste, and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Pre-heat the oven broiler.
4. Ladle your soup into oven safe serving bowls and place a slice of dark rye bread on top of each. Add provolone cheese on top of each slice of bread. Add a 1/2 slice of diced Swiss cheese and 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese on top of the provolone in each bowl. Position the bowls on a cookie sheet and broil in the preheated oven until the cheese bubbles up and browns slightly.

Enjoy!! Be careful—it will be hot!

Your OWA at Work

The Communications Committee

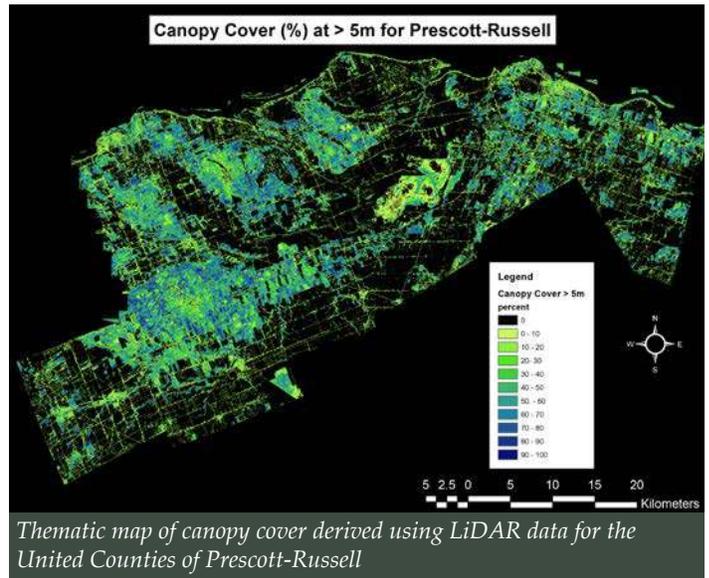
Members of our Executive Committee met with Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry staff and with Minister Yakabuski in February. A number of themes were discussed including support for our various projects and strengthening the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) so that what the OWA offers in products and services is more available to program participants through OWA membership. Our Executive maintained that this would help to further encourage good stewardship and proactive use of best management practices as part of the MFTIP.

Our Community Forest Owners Cooperative Pilot Project is progressing very well. Heideman Forest Services has committed to be our industrial partner for the Fleetwood Pilot, with Eleanor Reed of Kawartha Chapter working as our lead on the ground. We should be harvesting properties by early summer. Meetings with the partners in the Huronia/Couchiching Pilot have gone well, with the approach now well-defined and willing landowners identified. A University of Toronto Master of Forest Conservation (MFC) student—Shan Shukla, has also joined the project to help objectively analyze our Cooperative model. Both the Kawartha Land Trust and the Couchiching Conservancy have been excellent partners with these pilots. There are thousands of hectares of plantations across Ontario that are in need of thinning. The long term vision of the OWA is that what we learn from the pilots can be applied to other areas of the province.

The Woodlot Economics Study Phase 2 is back on track with another University of Toronto MFC student—Ben Gwilliam, now on board. Murray Woods-TreeDimensions will be working with Ben to process existing LiDAR data for the United Counties of Prescott-Russell into useable forest inventory, allowing analysis and modeling of specific case study landowner data for economic value based on applying best forest management practices. The project is already generating interesting preliminary information and thematic



Erica Dixon



map products using the LiDAR data, and promises to inform the larger project we will be undertaking in the near future with the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bio Economy (CRIBE) to develop private land forest inventory and a silvics library for southern Ontario.

A number of funding proposals have been submitted with respect to our new projects. The list includes the Trillium Foundation Resilient Communities Fund, CRIBE, MNP, Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Cascades Pulp and Paper, Forestry Futures Trust, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Funding from CRIBE, MNP and Cascades has already been committed, and we remain optimistic for the outcomes of the other proposals.

In terms of events and activities, we have started to organize our virtual conference and annual general meeting for April 20th to 22nd, 2021. Stay tuned through our e-newsletter and e-news blasts for more information and to register. Also, we have set the dates for Woodlands Appreciation Week for May 8th to 15th, 2021, and have already started to plan province-wide media outreach. Planning for special events and activities is also underway.

You will notice that this issue of the Ontario Woodlander (Vol. 102) has been delivered with a Mark's Work Warehouse discount card. Mark's has agreed to provide these 10% discount cards for all OWA members and families for the next two years!

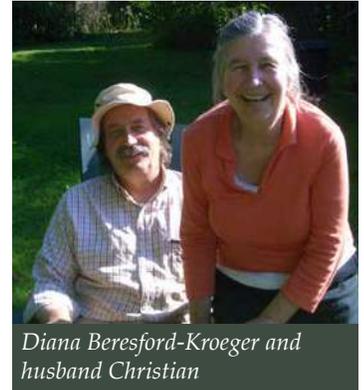
In closing, the OWA is pleased to welcome Erica Dixon to our staff. A graduate from Richard Ivey

Member Profile

Diana Beresford-Kroeger

Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter

I played with my dolls in the trees. The trees were my friends. One day I had set up house on a Barberry bush and my neighbour, Dr Barrett, came over to me and told me that I could eat the yellow flowers. Both of us enjoyed them, together. Then he produced a brown paper bag and offered me a chocolate covered date.



Diana Beresford-Kroeger and husband Christian

Dr Barrett, his wife, and her sister, all wore steel rimmed spectacles. That impressed me. They were a family of spectacles. So therefore, I asked that learned man the names of my friends. I wanted to know the actual names, not pussycat names, the real thing. He rang out the names in Latin of the arboretum that grew in front of our Georgian house, The Terrace.

I went to my first day of school and sat at my tiny desk and began to draw with my handful of new coloured pencils. My new Senior Kindergarten teacher asked me what I was drawing. I drew myself up and informed her of the names of my tree friends, all in Latin of course. Then I looked out the window of the classroom, which was high over the walled garden of our local Pharmacist and threw in one more name of a nectarine for good measure. My teacher literally had a fit. She marched off to the head mistress's office without closing the door. There was a loud conversation. I was terrified. Later that day a letter was sent to my mother, I was even more terrified now. My mother was furious with me for making, "an exhibition" of myself. I knew in my bones that I was in big trouble. I hid behind the couch with my dolls and waited for the dust to settle.

My husband, Christian, and I are members of the OWA for a very simple reason. We both love trees and the natural world we have around our house in the country. We learn something from nature every single day.

Editor's note:

Diana and Christian are members of the Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter. Diana's passion for trees has resulted in numerous books and one documentary film (*The Call of the Forest*). For further reading here is a list of her publications:

- *To Speak for the trees*
- *The Medicine of Trees: The Ninth Hair-Brown Memorial Lecture*
- *Sweetness of a Simple Life*
- *Arboretum Borealis*
- *The Global Forest*
- *Arboretum America: A Philosophy of the Forest*
- *Time Will Tell*
- *A garden for Life*
- *Global Chorus (Anthology)*
- *Heartwood: Poems for the Love of Trees (Anthology)*
- *International Handbook of Forest Therapy (Anthology)*

Business School, Erica brings international business development, strategy, and communications experience from multiple sectors. Erica comes to the OWA upon returning from Costa Rica where she most recently launched a land-management company which helped new landowners create self-sustaining agroforestry systems called Arboloco. She is excited to help to grow OWA's membership base through effective and integrated communications. Feel free to connect with her as she is always up for adventure whether it be foraging wild edibles, forest farming, or making a good old wood pile. Erica's email is erica.dixon@ontariowoodlot.com 🌿

Three Rules for Edible Wilds

1. Make sure you know it is safe to eat and only try small quantities the first time.
2. Wash what you harvest thoroughly, and if required make sure you cook it properly.
3. Only forage where allowed or where you have permission, not in parks or protected areas.

—Communications Committee

Enjoying Nature's Bounty from an Indigenous Perspective

By Dick Lalande, AKA Chief Dream Hunter, Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter

Our busy President, Paul Robertson, and I have had several discussions on the need to have our 'OWA Indigenous Stewardship Circle Committee' provide articles to the Woodlander. We both felt we could do more to recognize that many of our members and other Indigenous communities are woodlot owners. We should encourage all parties to participate in our association.

The purpose of this article is to show how our Indigenous Members of the Tay River Algonquian Community, via its Elders, have been taught by our parents to continue our tradition of fishing, hunting, gathering, and farming.

The Elders grew up in North Bay, Ontario, in a



Dick Lalande with his grandchildren during the deer hunt November 2013.
Photo Credit: Chris Lalande

French Canadian rural cultural Catholic environment. Our families spent most of their free time in the forest, lakes, rivers, and wetlands away from the urban areas and in the close wilderness, where they were more comfortable and resourceful in feeding their families. This practice continued after we all left home to receive higher education in the cities and finally joined together to form our private Indigenous community on Algonquin traditional territory in Lanark County.

The following are examples of how the Native and French cultures

shared and integrated their traditions to provide food for the table.

Water and Wetlands

Fishing

North Bay is the Nipissing Algonquin tribe's home territory, and fishing was their leading food and trade source. To this day, fishing pickerel in Lake Nipissing is still a significant tradition. Our founding Elders spent countless hours fishing Lake Nipissing as children.

In winter, we would build our ice-huts and spend all weekend on the ice, catching pickerel, white fish, perch, pike, and ling. At the end of the day, and just before dark, my father, my two brothers, and I would each pick up an empty plastic bucket. When the non-Indigenous fishermen left to go home, we would gather all the discarded fish they left on the ice so that no food was wasted. We would bring it home, clean the fish and Dad would grind up the pike and perch and make his famous fish paddies for the freezer.

In the summer, we would go out at night, with our flashlights, after rain, to collect dew-worms on the grass and keep them in the basement 'cool room' until the need to go trout fishing.

In the fall, we would take our hand-nets and buckets

and follow the Chippewa Creek from Lake Nipissing north until we would gather enough minnows, put them into our home-made fresh-water tank, and keep them alive for the winter season.

To round out our fish food supply, we would follow Dad to the Ontario Northland Railway (O.N.R.) yard, where he worked, jump into an empty boxcar, and make our way north to Rabbit Lake. There, we would stay overnight in an O.N.R. maintenance boxcar, which had a stove. We walked the tracks to collect left behind coal for the night fire. The next morning, we would snowshoe to the lake and spend all day catching lake trout until we caught our limit.

In the fall, we would take a full day and make our way to the Callander Marsh on Lake Nipissing, and with plastic buckets, go and pick up as many cranberries as we could. We were told to bring high rubber boots and an extra pair of dry, woolen socks.

There was trout fishing on Trout Lake and smelt netting in the rivers in the spring. Summer was filled with frog catching and speckled trout outings. Needless-to-say, our free time was food-related.

Waterfowl and Birds

The start of September was duck hunting season. Again, Dad and I would take the railway boxcar with our canoe and hunting gear and head north to the Little Jocko River. Friday night, we would set off at dark, set up our outside sleeping area, under the stars, and set out hunting ducks at first light. On Saturday night, we would sleep at Annie's Trappers Cabin and take the night train home on Sunday night. We usually got our limit of blacks and mallards.



*Hunter walking at Lalande Managed Forest Nov 2004.
Photo Credit: Chris Lalande*

Later in October and November, we would hunt ducks on Lake Nipissing, in Cache Bay and Callander Bay. On occasion, we would leave Friday night, sleep in our canoe in the marsh, and put decoys out early in the morning. Of course, it is hard to imagine doing that today!

Dad taught us to clean the belly feathers and set them apart to put in our pillows. He would also make sure we used hot bee's wax to remove all the pin feathers and keep all the hearts and gizzards for Mom's dressing.

Once, at the age of 15, while hunting partridge, I saw a bird flying overhead and shot it out of the sky. Not knowing what it was, I brought it home to show Dad. It was a seagull, and the rule is 'if you shoot it, you eat it'! It was exceedingly difficult to remove all the feathers, but once done, Mom made me cook and eat it for supper. I never tasted anything as bad. It was like chewing on a football; it was very leathery-tough and tasted like a dead fish smells. That was the last time I ever shot anything I did not intend to eat.

Forest Trees and Plants

Our family also spent a lot of time in the forest foraging food. I remember the late summer family outings when we would spend all day picking blueberries. My Dad made special, long-handled metal blueberry-pickers that we could use by just scooping up the blueberry leaves and all, and put them in empty plastic pails. We would collect about a bushel full of blueberries and bring them home. Dad designed the vacuum cleaner exhaust air to blow the blueberries' leaves as they rolled down a V-shaped transfer board to a cleaned basket. Mom made the best blueberry preserves I have ever tasted. Of course, we picked wild strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries as well.

Trees provided us with choke and pin cherries to make jams and jellies. Birch trees provided Dad with the sap to make birch-sap wine.

Plants like dandelions provided salad and greens, and the flowers were the main ingredient for dandelion wine. I have experimented with making tea with new spring, white and red pine needles. You collect a reasonable amount, dice them up into tiny pieces, boil a serious handful in a teapot (for longer than expected) and voila, pine tea! It is not that bad tasting, and it is good for you. Sometimes I add wintergreen leaves and berries for an exceptional taste.



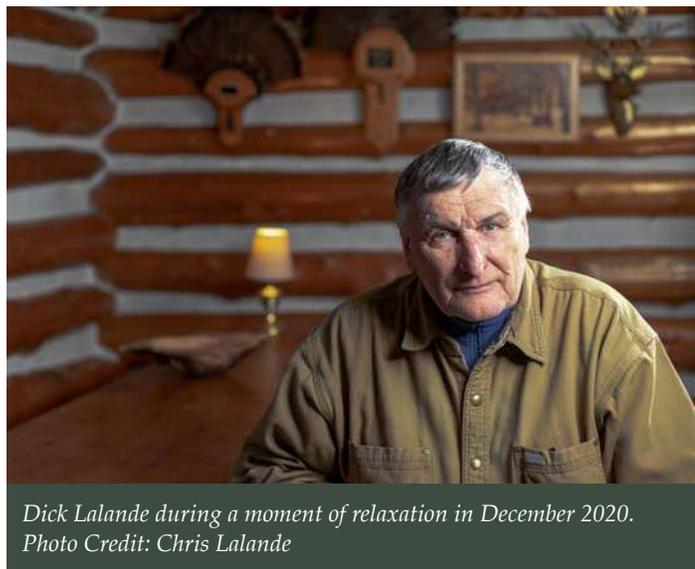
Animals

Many of the forest animals provide us with all the meat we need. Our families have hunted all the regular animals like moose, caribou, deer, bear, and rabbit and, there are many cookbooks for all these meats. However, I encourage woodlot owners to consider expanding their palate and try the other vegetarian eating animals like beaver, muskrat, squirrel, groundhog, and porcupine.

Food is a vital and social part of our lives. Some of our Algonquian community's finest dreams and memories were when we all gathered for a wildlife feast. The event would begin by having the teenagers go out to hunt and collect a full basket of bullfrogs to be cleaned and prepared for supper, cooked on tinfoil plates, covered with onions and wild garlic. Next came a bowlful of a fish-head soup made with pickerel, pike, and perch, followed by a roasted beaver recipe accompanied with my wife's favourite mustard, a side dish of potatoes and squash. The finale was scooping up a plate of fresh wild blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries, dropping them into a bowl of cold sweet cream. We would then make our way down to the lake, start a small campfire and make a pot of white pine and wintergreen tea. When darkness came, and the stories and legends were told, we would share a cup of hot tea, sweetened with our own Grampa Chief's maple syrup, stand, raise our cups to our ancestors in the stars and joyfully sing: **"OH CANADA OUR HOME AND NATIVE LAND"**! 🍁



Collecting sap April 2013. Photo Credit: Chris Lalande



Dick Lalande during a moment of relaxation in December 2020. Photo Credit: Chris Lalande

Quiz 26 Answers

1. Although most of us think of dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) as a weed, it has long been used as food and in herbal medicine. Most parts of the dandelion are both edible and nutritious. You should avoid the flower stems, as they have a white, sticky film that can have a laxative effect. Young dandelion leaves can be eaten raw or as cooked greens; the taste resembles that of a spicier arugula. The flowers can be fried or turned into dandelion wine. Dandelion root can be roasted to create caffeine-free dandelion coffee.
2. Wild leeks or ramps (*Allium tricoccum*) generally grow best in patches in rich, moist, deciduous forests preferring south facing slopes. They are one of the first edible wild plants to sprout in springtime. If you harvest them for eating, please only remove a few individuals from each patch. Wild leeks are a great delicacy, and can be used in a variety of dishes, including in soups and salads.
3. Morchella (the true morels) are safe to eat as long as they have been cooked thoroughly. Eating raw morels can cause gastric upset. Some individuals can have allergies to morels, so they should be consumed with caution the first time. Morels are considered to be one of the tastiest of the wild mushrooms. It is important to know the difference between true and false morels, as the latter is toxic and can cause serious illness.

Edible Wild Plants... Available Everywhere!

By Michael Pineau, Kawartha Chapter

When our Executive Director, still to me my little brother Johnny, asked if I could write an overview article for this theme issue, it brought back a lot of memories, some of which he shared earlier in his note. I could tell many more stories involving him, some just embarrassing and others downright incriminating; but I will take the high road and instead focus on the task at hand.

There is a bounty of delicious and nutritious plants close to our homes, so the descriptors 'available everywhere' are certainly fitting. Foraging wild edibles in our province is a growing and rewarding hobby that combines fresh air, exercise, and nutrition. Starting on your own properties a short hike will reveal an abundance of opportunity. With my tag-along younger sibling, I have greatly enjoyed this pursuit since the 1960's, and it surprised us both in the early days what was actually available and acceptable to eat in Southern Ontario.

For example, the lowly dandelion offers much for salad lovers. In spring the fresh yellow crowns found in unused fields or around the house in our lawns are all too familiar. These ubiquitous flowers, along with plantain, purslane, chickweed, and mustard greens make an excellent spring salad mix, free for the taking. "Eat the weeds!" should be our motto as people do in Europe as part of their spring ritual.



Delicious and nutritious Dandelions

We were fortunate growing up, as we always lived near forests, farms, and meadows, and did a lot of exploring. It had nothing to do with our mother wanting us out of the house as much as possible. For your own foraging adventures, on the edge of the woods, the invasive weed garlic mustard, provides a tasty larder of greens and cooking vegetable that can

be used much like spinach. This prolific species is crowding out native plants, so harvest all you are able to while you are eradicating it! Indeed, some of our best edibles are alien species from Europe that seem to naturalize wherever we humans travel. This comprises a long list that includes plants such as wild asparagus, day lilies, Jerusalem artichoke, pigweed, and burdock.

Our family also always seemed to be close to water, whether the Otonabee River, or meandering creeks and streams with adjacent wetlands. In these wet areas you will find cattails, probably the most useful and versatile of all wild plants. The young spring shoots, when peeled, are used as Cossack asparagus. The peeled core and crown are a crisp cucumber-like snack. The pollen shaken into a container can be used as a flour additive that is rich in protein. There is no wonder that the cattail has been dubbed the supermarket of the swamp! Also nearby is the well known fiddlehead, the unopened fronds of the ostrich fern. The shady banks of cold forest brooks are their preferred habitat. Why buy them at the grocer when they are free and abundant and close to home?



Wetland with copious Cattails



Ostrich Fern Fiddleheads

continued next page ...

Moving further into the hardwood forest, especially on south slopes, are the wild leeks or ramps. These are a delectable spring onion with garlic overtones. Wild leek soup is a culinary treasure, but please be careful to only harvest a few per patch as they take up to six years to mature. And I can certainly vouch for the excellence of the recipe and results mentioned earlier by Johnny in his story about our wild leek soup. My opinion, however, is that there can never really be enough cooking sherry added!

Of course, we are all familiar with the sugar maple tree and its sweet treat, but less so with our birch trees. The common paper birch also yields a copious quantity of sap that can be used as a fresh drink or boiled down to a molasses like syrup with reputed healthful qualities. Its relative the yellow birch has twigs that contain oil of wintergreen and makes a refreshing tea.

Very few wild plants are outright dangerous to consume, but correct preparation is important. Stinging nettles for example make both excellent soup and cooked greens, but of course we would never eat them raw. Another delicious pot herb is marsh marigold. The pretty yellow clumps of flower are found in wet areas. They must be cooked in a couple of changes of boiling water to make them tasty, but it is worth the effort. Most woodlots will also have extensive crops of mushrooms, many of which are choice and delectable. While most are safe, a few are highly toxic and careful identification is essential.

The familiar sumac with its red seed heads in summer can be soaked and strained to make a wild lemonade.



March Marigolds and Ostrich Ferns

Later in the spring and summer many wild fruits and nuts mature. Perhaps the choicest of these is the wild strawberry, abundant if inconspicuous. The effort needed to harvest these tiny beauties is more than outweighed by the exquisite preserves they make – provided the berries do not disappear on the way home. Another under-appreciated fruit is the June berry, a small tree found along forest edges that is related to the more western Saskatoon berry. Look for the white blossoms in spring to indicate where to harvest. This advice also applies to the high bush cranberry, an abundant native viburnum that yields amazing crimson jelly. In the same areas, you can often find elderberries, the flowers of which can be tempura fried as a tasty snack. You can also dry the fruit for pies and wine. I think we tried to make wine out of just about anything we found when we were young, and most of it was quite good except for the dandelion swill that was described earlier; I had nothing to do with that fiasco by the way.

Another unusual fruit is the mayapple or the American mandrake. Large patches of this large leaf perennial plant are common in open woodlands and along roadsides. When the leaves die down in summer, they reveal a sweet egg-sized fruit that is delicious raw or in a jam. It has a unique tropical flavor, but the fruit must be soft and very ripe to be used. You have to beat the chipmunks for this one. It should be noted that the entire may apple plant apart from the fruit including the seeds are toxic. Only eat a little bit of the fruit as a serving. Other wild fruits that are useful include chokecherry, northern wild raisin, and wild grapes; in some years they are found in huge abundance.

Our native nut trees are much under-appreciated. The common beech tree in some years produces bumper crops of small but delicious nuts, if you are to beat out the blue jays and squirrels. Our oak trees produce huge amounts of calorie-rich nuts that must be ground and leached of their tannins to make an edible flour high in protein; Canada's Indigenous peoples used these extensively. Also, as our climate warms southern species such as species such as walnut, bitternut hickory and shagbark hickory are becoming more common in Southern Ontario. They produce huge amounts of hard-to-process but delicious fodder foods.

I hope this brief overview article has both encouraged and catalyzed your interest in edible wild plants.



Top left downward: Bur Oak acorn, Bittersweet Hickory nuts, Red Oak acorn and husked Beech nuts

There are many good books available that will help you to find and accurately identify the abundant and delicious wild forage of our forests, fields, and wetlands. That is how we first learned and turned our family’s love of the outdoors into another enjoyable and interesting hobby. Eat well my friends!

My love affair with nature is so deep that I am not satisfied with being a mere onlooker, or nature tourist. I crave a more real and meaningful relationship. The spicy teas and tasty delicacies I prepare from wild ingredients are the bread and wine in which I have communion and fellowship with nature, and with the Author of that nature.
— Euell Gibbons

Tree Syrups in Southern Ontario

By Erica Dixon, OWA Communication Coordinator, York-Durham Chapter

One of the oldest forms of forest farming is the tapping of delicious and nutritious tree sap. As a novice to tree syrup harvesting, I thought it may be helpful to walk readers through the series of questions I asked friends and family in order to feel comfortable starting to tap my first trees this spring. I also consulted the book *Farming the Woods* by Ken Mudge and Steve Gabriel – an incredible resource for those interested forest farming. I am looking forward to sharing stories with readers this spring.

How many trees should I tap?

Before you decide which trees to tap, it important to understand the scale you want to undertake and aim for a goal in gallons (or litres). Do you want to just supply your household for the year? Have enough to share with family and friends or sell small scale? Or sell commercially?

Tapping less than 100 trees is considered hobby-scale. It is always best to trial at a hobby scale before going commercial. If you tap more than 5, the syrup boiling should be done outdoors. You can make a simple backyard set up to boil the sap using a couple 6-8 inch “hotel pans” on cinderblocks over a fire. If you are looking to experiment on your woodlot just for your family, you could aim for 1 gallon (or 3.8 litres)

of finished syrup which would require tapping 4-5 maple trees.

Scale	Personal Use	Surplus to Share	Commercial
No. of taps	5-50	100-300	500-1000+
Approx. Gallons Syrup	1-10	20-60	100-400+
Collection Method	Buckets	Buckets or Tubing	Tubing, Vacuum System
Boiler Method	Outdoor Woodstove or Turkey Fryer	Outdoor homemade or purchased evaporator	Commercially purchased or fabricated system

Which trees can I tap?

Sugar Maple is the most commonly tapped for commercial syrup. However, there are over 27 different tap-able species, each with their unique flavour, sugar content, and quantity of sap-flow! Ten of these are maple species (Acer Species), 6 are birch species (Betula Species), 5 are walnut species (Juglans Species), followed by Alder (Alnus Genus), Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis), Basswood (Tilia Americana), Ironwood (Ostrya virginiana), Hickory (Carya genus), and Elm (Ulmus genus). The flavour is just as

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much influenced by species as your unique climate and the time of harvest.

Which trees should I start with?

You can start with Sugar Maple, Birch and Black Walnut.

Tree	Flavour	Season	Sap per Season	Syrup Yield	Trees/gallon syrup	Price
Sugar Maple	Classically sweet	6 weeks (end of Feb)	10 gallons of sap per tree	1/40 gallons of sap	4	\$45/gallon
Black Walnut	Similar to maple syrup with "nutty" twist	10 weeks starting at the end of Jan	3.3 gallons of sap per tree	1/40 gallons of sap	14	\$60/gallon for maple-black walnut syrup
Paper Birch	Has a spicy licorice flavour	3 weeks (end of April)	10 gallons of sap per tree	1/110 gallons of sap	11	\$350/gallon

Can I tap timber trees?

There has been a niche market for the sale of timber with stains from syrup harvest, however it is typically not recommended to tap trees that are candidates for timber. If you want, you could try to minimize scarring by tapping lower on the tree.

When should I tap?

Typically, mid-February. The syrup harvest season is usually March to April. Maple and Black Walnut sap starts to flow around the same time as a result of dramatic temperature changes (also known as stem pressure), when the temperature dips below zero at night and rises above zero during the daytime. Birch trees, however, do not begin flowing until the end of Maple season. They respond instead to off-root pressure and require that the temperature stays above freezing day and night.

What size of tree should I tap?

It is recommended to choose a tree 10 inches or more in diameter and only use one tap to not stress the tree.

What equipment will I need?

- 5/16" metal spouts (health spouts)
- Metal buckets (milk jugs or food grade buckets will also work)

- 5/16" drill bit and non-corded drill (it is worth it to purchase a tapping drill bit from a maple supplier)
- Hammer to tap in the spouts
- Large pans for collecting and boiling
- Cone filter for filtering the syrup
- Stove to boil down the sap
- A candy or syrup thermometer (which can read up to 225° F / 107°C)

How should I go about tapping the trees?

Select healthy trees with large crowns. Drill cleanly through the sap wood and slightly into hardwood. This is about 1.5 inches. Tap the spouts in lightly with a hammer. Do not leave the taps in for longer than eight weeks or the tree will heal around the wound.

How many times per day will I need to empty buckets for Maple Trees?

On a cold day you will find you empty just once; on warmer days you will empty twice.

How long will it take to boil?

It will take all day! You will need to reduce it by boiling very slowly over low heat. It helps to have a station outside for initial boiling where you will continue to add and boil down continuous incoming sap, and then a "finishing" station like your stovetop to monitor more closely. You can also strain for debris before the syrup gets too thick.

How do I know when to stop boiling?

As the sap boils down, it starts to take on the browner color we associate with syrup. It will get hotter and you will start to see boiling bubbles instead of just steam. You will start to get a feel for the thickness. Without a syrup thermometer you will not know sugar content, so you will have to make your best guess. It is considered safe once it has reached 219° F / 103.8°C.

When is "sap" considered "syrup"?

When you have boiled the sap down to 67.7% sugar you can call it "syrup". This is the point where the sugar content is high enough not mold, but low enough not to crystallize.

Can the sap be enjoyed raw?

Yes! Even without making syrup you can enjoy sap raw, which for sugar maple contains about 98% water and 2% sugar. It is viewed as a spring tonic in many cultures around the globe, with over fifty vitamins and minerals as well as a number of probiotics similar to those found in Yogurt. It should be treated like milk where it is stored in the fridge and consumed within one week of harvest.

Where can I learn more?

The Maple Sugar Book by Helen and Scott Nearing
Backyard Sugarin' by Rink Mann and Daniel Wolf
The Sugarmaker's Companion by Mike Farrell
Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association: <https://www.omspa.ca/> 📄

A Beginner's Guide to Making Maple Syrup

By Matt DeMille, Upper Trent Valley Chapter

Full disclosure, I am not an expert. I am just a fledgling amateur, but I think it is actually a good position to offer some advice on things to consider when making maple syrup for the first time.

We have owned our woodlot since 2013 and did not tap a tree until 2020. We talked about it from the start and many things contributed to the six-season delay, but we just did not think we were ready to commit. We realize now that it did not need to be all or nothing. You can scale the experience to fit your schedule and your budget. There is a lot of information out there, but here are some tips based on our research and experience as first-timers.

Make it as Big or as Small as You Want

You do not need a sugar shack, hundreds of tappable trees, or a state-of-the-art evaporator. Those things will help with efficiency, quality, and quantity, but a more manageable operation and hands-on experience for first timers will inform if, when, and how you want to invest.

The Basics

Tree Selection

Syrup can be made from many trees as explained in the previous article *Tree Syrups in Southern Ontario* by Erica Dixon. I will focus on sugar maple, but the fundamental principles apply to all. Look for larger diameter trees (DBH of at least 10" for a single tap, 20" for two taps), but more importantly think about the site and crown structure of trees. Large and

full crowns, especially those on ridges or open to southern exposure tend to produce more sap. **First-timer tip:** Think about access too—from deep snow in the beginning to bare ground at the end of the season, you need to think about how you will get the sap from tap to pan.

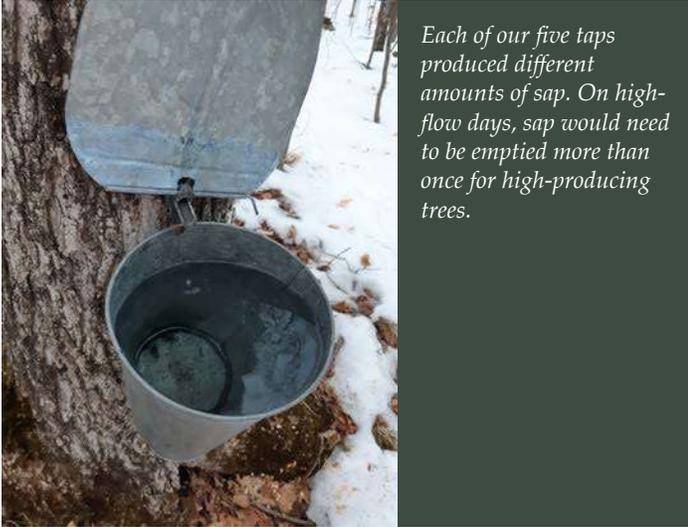
Tapping

You will need a drill bit that matches your spile size (commonly 5/16" or 7/16"). Drill in about 1.5-2.5" (pre-mark the bit with tape for easy reference) into the tree on a slight upward angle. **First-timer tip:** Drill mid-day when sap is expected to run (night temperature below 0°C followed by day temperature above 0°C), and the sap should drip almost immediately. **First-timer tip:** sap production and sugar content can vary incredibly with season length, weather, and quality of each tree, so you probably will not be able to predict how many litres of syrup you will produce per tap.

Collecting Sap

Two-gallon metal pails on trees is iconic Canadiana and where most people start, but larger pails or even bags are available to collect more sap without jumping to the complexity of gravity or vacuum tubing systems. **First-timer tip:** If you do not live at your woodlot or cannot be there every day, investigate do-it-yourself (DIY) options such as single-tree tubing from tap to a 5-gallon pail on the ground.

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Each of our five taps produced different amounts of sap. On high-flow days, sap would need to be emptied more than once for high-producing trees.

Storing Sap

With only a few taps, it will take time to get enough sap for a boil (40 L of sap = 1 L of syrup). You need to think about storage, especially as it gets warmer and you need to keep sap cold. We used 4 and 5-gallon food grade (and sterilized) buckets with lids because they are easily transported and stored, can be scaled up or down depending on your needs, and are manageable to transfer sap to your pan. **First-timer tip:** ask your local bakery or deli if they have buckets to spare, but make sure you know what was in them previously because you do not want lingering food flavours in your sap. **First-timer tip:** we piled snow early in the season on the north side of a building (any shady spot will do). When the rest of the snow was gone and the days were warmer, this became natural 'cold storage' for our sap.

Boiling Sap

Evaporator systems are available commercially but even hobbyist versions are pricy. The two basic components are a heat source and a pan. We used the easiest and cheapest heat source for us – an open fire. It worked, but it requires full-time tending, a straining spoon to remove ash, and more wood (and time) than a closed system would (especially on windy days). **First-timer tip:** although none of us want to wear face masks any more than we need to these days, you need to respect the level of smoke inhalation associated with full-time tending of an open fire.

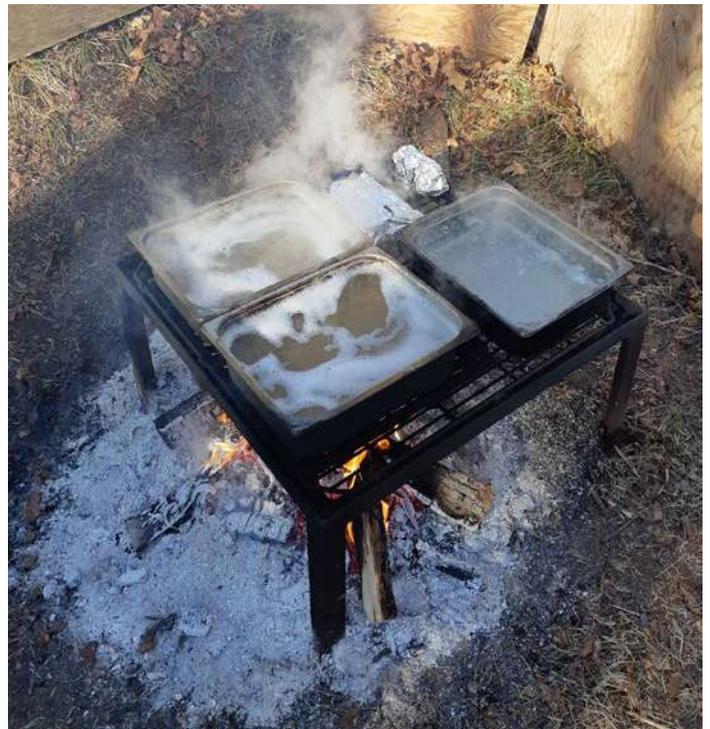
You can buy large evaporator pans, but it is not

necessary right away. You just need something that can withstand your heat source and maximizes surface area for evaporation. **First-timer tip:** we used stainless steel steam pans (1/2 size; 4" depth) as a cost-effective solution that could work on an open fire, as well as in a future DIY evaporator set-up.

There are some simple and cost-effective solutions for DIY outdoor evaporators. For our second syrup season, we have made a simple concrete block firebox and chimney that fits our steam pans to help contain the fire (and heat), as well as keep the smoke and ash away from us and the boiling sap. **First-timer tip:** boiling can be done inside but is not advisable without a proper system to remove the moisture that is produced. Outdoor wood stoves, propane camp stoves, and countless other alternatives can be found online to get you going without a big investment.

Finishing Sap

Going from sap to syrup can be done completely outdoors, but it is a much less controlled environment. We brought ours to the house to finish



Our two-pan open-fire set-up doubled as the heat source for snacks, lunch, or dinner to keep the kids engaged on long days. We used a third pan off to the side to warm up the sap (so adding sap did not 'kill' the boil)



Our DIY evaporator set-up for 2021. Same three-pan approach: two boiling pans and a warming pan (front) supported by dry stacked (no mortar) concrete blocks.

the sap when it was close. **First-timer tip:** if you are not finishing where you boil, be sure to think about how you are going to transfer the unfinished syrup. It will be hot and slosh a lot (especially on a moving vehicle), so you need to find an option to minimize loss of your hard-earned liquid gold. We are going to try a 1-gallon wide-mouth glass jar (with airtight lid) in 2021.

Making Syrup

A hydrometer or refractometer measures density and will tell you when your syrup is finished (66-69 °Brix) – too low and it will be undercooked (reduces shelf life) and too high will cause crystallization. Temperature can be used too (approx. 4°C above the boiling point of water), so we opted for a candy thermometer as a more simple, cost-effective, and multi-purpose tool. **First-timer tip:** make sure you calibrate your thermometer to the boiling point (temperature of water after boiling for five minutes) in your area (changes with elevation), and current atmospheric pressure (changes throughout season). **First-timer tip:** knowing when to stop can be the most nerve-racking step, but you will be surprised how quickly you get the feel for it, and a few maple sugar crystals are a nice consolation for not getting it quite right.

Filtering & Bottling

Not everyone filters their syrup. For some it is aesthetics, but our open-fire boil required filtering. You can use coffee filters, cheese cloth, or other materials to filter, but we opted to purchase a wool filter and pre-filters (helps extend the life of the reusable wool filter). **First-timer tip:** unless you have a frame to hold your filters, this is a two-person job. Also, filter into a large container with a spout (e.g.

glass measuring cup) for easy pouring into your bottles. **First-timer tip:** rinse the pre-filters and use them multiple times.

There are many options for bottling your syrup. We used mason jars (sterilized) because we had them on hand, they store easily, you can write on the lids, and the syrup is said to last longer when properly sealed with this method. **First-timer tip:** bottle in mason jars while the syrup is still hot and as they cool you will hear a satisfying ‘pop’ that lets you know they sealed. **First-timer tip:** niter, or ‘sugar sand’, may appear as a suspended sediment in cooled maple syrup. Do not panic, these are common, edible, and do not affect the taste of your syrup. Filtering can help remove it.



In 2020, we did seven boils, and you can see differences in the colour and clarity of the syrup for each.

Reflecting on our Experience

With a little know-how and modest preparation, anyone can make maple syrup. The key—start small, learn through doing, and grow at a pace and scale that works for you.

There is nothing quite like making small-batch maple syrup. There is incredible satisfaction in going from forest to table—pancakes somehow taste even better with your very own maple syrup! But there is also a magic in making syrup that brings about an innate sense of nostalgia and tradition even if you have never done it before. Even after the first year, I now see why it is an annual tradition for so many.

There is also an incredible science behind making maple syrup, and to fully understand it you need to be a biologist, chemist, and forester all wrapped into one. Luckily, you do not need to master it in year one (or ever) to have an incredibly enjoyable and rewarding experience. 🍯

Maple Recipes from Sugarstone Farm

By Andy and Shelley Straughan, Sugarstone Farm, Near North Chapter

Pickled Maple Spruce Tips

Pairs nicely with anything grilled, salads or drop a couple in a Gin & Tonic, or a Caesar!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cider vinegar
- 3 heaping TBSP Sugarstone Farm Maple Syrup
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 dried chilies
- ¼ cup of water
- 2 tightly packed cups spruce tips
- 1 500 ml jar

Instructions:

1. Place the first 6 ingredients (everything BUT the spruce tips) in a saucepan and bring to a boil.
2. While the brine is heating, clean the spruce tips in a large bowl by rinsing in cold water.
3. Pack the spruce tips in a mason jar.
4. Once the brine reaches a boil, carefully pour into mason jar.
5. Leave jar to cool on counter stirring 3 or 4 times in the first few minutes to ensure all spruce tips are submerged in the hot brine.
6. Once cool cover with a lid and keep in fridge.



Picking some spruce tips



Pickled maple spruce tips

Maple Taffy or “Sugar on Snow”

From “Sweet Ontario—Our Favourite Recipes”, Ontario Maple Syrup Producer’s Association. Contact a local producer / OMSPA member for availability of this great recipe book. You can search here www.ontariomaple.com

Ingredients:

- 2 cups Ontario maple syrup (Golden or Amber grade)

Directions:

1. In a heavy bottomed 4L pot, boil 2 cups maple syrup on low to medium heat to 23F (10-12C) above boiling point: about 232 to 235F (110-112C), the higher temp on a sunny day.
2. Stir the surface occasionally to keep from boiling over. Immediately pour on a mound of freshly fallen snow packed in bowls or trays and serve, using popsicle sticks or wooden spoons.

Serves 10-14.



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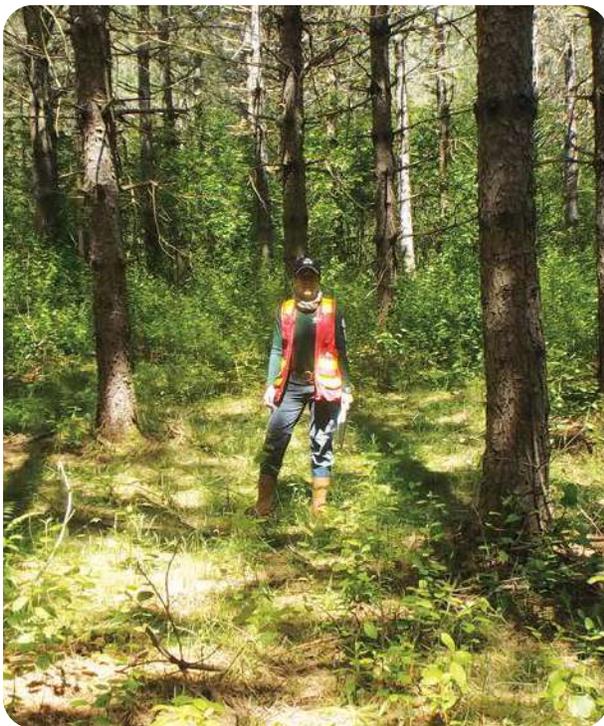
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Can you see our researcher in these two photos of buckthorn?

The photo on the left shows the results 24 months after a single application of LALCIDE CHONDRO

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Harbingers of Spring: Ramps and Morels

By Fred Huszarik, Lanark & District Chapter

As we turn the page into a New Year, our thoughts go to spring activities on our 200-acre woodlot outside of Almonte; planning for gardens (my wife is already ordering her seeds in the middle of January), backyard maple syrup (I usually do around 120 taps for friends and family), and harvesting ramps and morels.

Ramps (*Allium Tricoccum*, a.k.a. wild leeks, wild garlic) are one of the first green leaf plants to emerge in late March to early April in our mostly deciduous woodlot in eastern Ontario. They are an edible plant with green leaves and a bulbous white root that has the taste of a garlicky mild onion or shallot and looks a bit like a green onion. You cannot miss the distinctive garlic smell as you walk through a bunch of leaves in the woods. The season for harvesting ramps is quite short, only about two to three weeks. They will grow to harvestable size by mid-May and the leaves will die off by early June, depending on the weather; ramps do not like heat!



A large patch of wild leeks



Harvested wild leeks

Ramps growing in your woodlot are a blessing but can also be a curse. They are a blessing because they are delicious and prized by chefs, so they can be a cash crop if you have acres of them as we do. We supply ramps to several restaurants in the Ottawa area. They can be a curse because we get a lot of 'leek poachers', as we call them, trespassing on the property and destroying the plants by digging them up, especially living near the Quebec border where ramps are protected by law and harvesting is limited to personal use. Sustainable picking of ramps should be done by hand and not with shovels.

As an edible, ramp leaves are an excellent addition to salads, sautéed as you would spinach, or made into one of our favourites, ramp pesto. You will find lots of recipes on-line, but here is a simple one:

Ramp pesto:

- Take about ½ lb. cleaned ramps, about 15-20 plants leaves and bulbs, and parboil them in a pot of boiling water, no more than 2 minutes. Immediately put them into a water/ice bath to cool, and then dry them on paper towels or a dish towel.
- Place the ramps in a food processor, or blender, with about ¼ cup pine nuts or walnuts, and process until smooth.
- Add ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese and process some more.
- With the food processor running, slowly add about ¼ cup olive oil.
- Add salt and pepper to taste.
- We usually put it into small sealer jars and freeze them, for pesto for pizzas and pasta all year long.

Another popular way of dealing with the whole plant, or just the bulbs, is to pickle them. There are many recipes for 'pickled ramps' on the web and again, these can be stored in sealer jars and used throughout the year. The bulbs are also great sautéed into scrambled eggs.

Towards the end of ramp season in late May I start watching for **morel mushrooms** (*Morchella esculenta*) which are a species of fungi that comes in a variety of sub-species some of which, although not poisonous in the sense that they will kill you, are not recommended for eating such as 'false morels'. We look for black and yellow morels which are classed as 'choice'

mushrooms in the culinary world and are one of the earliest mushrooms to appear in the woods. One of the attractive things about morels is that they are relatively easy to identify and therefore a safe mushroom to harvest even for novice mushroom hunters.



A morel mushroom



Harvested morel mushrooms

Found throughout deciduous woodlots, morels are often prolific around some species of 'host' trees such as, recently (1-2 year) dead elm and, in my woods, live white ash especially larger trees. If you had an elm drop its leaves overnight (as they often do when hit by Dutch elm disease) in the last year, there is a very good chance of finding morels within a six-foot perimeter around the base of the tree this year and for a couple of years to come. Like most mushrooms, morel spores (seeds) travel on the wind, so if you find a morel look for more up and down the prevailing winds direction. They do need wet weather to propagate so in May / June if there is a heavy rain after a significant dry spell, that is a good time to look for morels as they will often appear almost overnight.

Again, you can find many recipes on-line, but my favourite use is with creamy pasta dishes and risotto. I would not use them in stews because it would be a waste of their delicate flavour. Instead, use a fall mushroom like Maitake (*Grifola Frondosa*), a.k.a. Hen-of-the-Woods (not to be confused with Chicken-of-the-Woods which is a different fungi), which are found at the base of white oak in Sept./Oct. and have a bold flavour like a Porcini. If you do not find morels in your woodlot but are lucky enough to come across some fresh morels at your local farmers market, here is my recipe for our traditional spring morel appetizer:

Creamed morels on toast:

- 6/8 2 to 3-inch morels sliced lengthwise, and cleaned of any bugs
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- about 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots, or ramp bulbs if you have them
- a good slug (3 Tbsp.?) of Madeira, or a semi-sweet sherry
- 1/2 cup 35% cream
- salt & pepper to taste (I like lots of pepper!)
- 2 slices soft sourdough bread or baguette slices, toasted

Heat the butter over medium heat until foamy. Add the shallots and morels and sauté for 5-7 minutes until the morels take on some colour. Add the Madeira (careful it doesn't flame up in your face!) and continue cooking until most of the Madeira is cooked-off. Add the cream, reduce heat and while stirring let simmer a couple of minutes until the cream thickens. Add salt and pepper to taste. Take off heat and serve on toasts, cut into appetizer portions, with a glass of Chardonnay. Don't forget to lick the pan with your finger after it has cooled off!

Finally, a couple of important cautions about wild mushrooms: Wild mushrooms must always be cooked and never eaten raw, even Shitake and Chanterelle that you can buy in the store. Most importantly, never eat a wild mushroom unless you can positively identify it. Many people get seriously ill each year from eating poisonous mushrooms.

If you have any questions pertaining to this article, I will try to answer them at: fhuszarik@xplornet.ca. 🍄

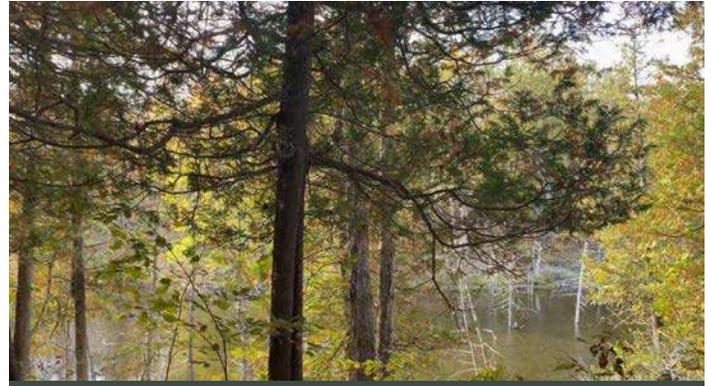
Hot Tea on a Cold Day

By Monica Capovilla, Executive Director, Wintergreen Studios, Limestone Chapter

Editor's Note: The OWA thanks our friends at Wintergreen Studios for contributions to this issue of The Ontario Woodlander. Located in the Township of South Frontenac, Wintergreen Studios is a non-profit offering educational programming for sustainable living, with a focus on the arts, and also provides meeting facilities for individuals and groups, including wilderness weekend retreats. Their lodge, cabins and land are in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve in Southeastern Ontario. For more information: <https://www.wintergreenstudios.com/>

Sit back, close your eyes, and come with me on an adventure. It is a brisk winter's day in early February, about -15°C. The sun is peeking out just beyond the treetops for the first time in what feels like forever. You pull on your bibbed snow pants and zip your down coat up to your chin. You pull your fluffy wool hat over your ears and lace up your tall, sheepskin-lined boots. You excitedly step outside and take in a deep breath of the crisp morning air. You strap on your well-loved snowshoes, extend your poles, slip on your knit mittens, and energetically set off down the Main Trail at Wintergreen Studios toward Paddy's Lake. You pass by the labyrinth, covered in a fresh blanket of snow from the night before, barely able to make out the stone-lined paths. You nod at the Meadow Hut, its shrubs nestled on the living roof greeting you as you pass by. You make your way through the cluster of birch trees, up to the top of the hill where you see a pair of deer, munching on some twigs. You look out over Long Pond—it somehow feels as though you can see the whole world from there. You make your way down the steep hill, one rock at a time, conveniently placed as if to have created a set of stairs. You reach the short wooden bridge only to be coaxed up the other side by the sound of blue jays off in the distance. You reach Long Pond Island, admiring the tracks in the snow and the patches of cattail in the distance, but you are called forward by the earthy smell and sound of moving water. You find yourself walking across the bridge where you notice a beautiful beaver dam—the trees arranged like a piece of art. You continue walking, taking a moment to play a tune on the xylophone that is thoughtfully strung between the trees, only to realize that you have found yourself in the mystical Cedar Forest. Its cascading boulders and towering trees with gnarled branches tell stories of all the animals that call it home. You take a few minutes to admire the scene, committing it to memory for times to come, and continue the steep trek up the hill, grasping the ropes as you put one foot in front of the other.

After a few hours exploring the trails and taking in the sights—having visited the woodland cabins along the way—you return to the Lodge. Its yellow



Cedar trees on Long Pond Island

strawbale walls greet you like a warm embrace. You stoke the wood stove, take off a few layers, fill the kettle with fresh well water, and set it on top. Soon the steam begins to rise, and the sound of a train whistle fills the air. You pull the Eastern Cedar cuttings that you collected from your pocket, grab a tea pot, and submerge them beneath the boiling water. After a few minutes of steeping, you pour the golden elixir into a delicate antique teacup balanced on its saucer. You take a few sips of tea and bask in the sunlight streaming in from the clerestory windows high above you. “A true winter adventure,” you think to yourself. “What a true feeling of connection to the natural world and a deep appreciation for all that it has to offer.”

While this magical winter adventure may sound like a fairy tale, there is good news: that comforting pot of Cedar Tea can easily be recreated in your own home! We recommend using cuttings from Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), also known as northern white cedar or swamp cedar, as it is native to Eastern Canada and much of the North Central and North Eastern regions of the United States, and quite common. Look for cedars near streams or ponds as they tend to favour cool, moist, nutrient-rich locations.

Cedar tea truly is a golden elixir and has long been touted for its medicinal benefits. In many Indigenous cultures, cedar branches are used in sweat lodge ceremonies, to purify homes, and as a medicine as the tea of simmered cuttings is used to treat fevers and rheumatic complaints, chest colds, and flu. The cedar's volatile oil helps the body release excess mucous from

the respiratory system and because it is also extremely high in vitamin C, cedar tea has long been used to treat chest colds. Cedar is also high in proanthocyanins, which are considered to be important for helping prevent cancer, as well as resveratrol, an antioxidant associated with anti-aging and cardiovascular health. Talk about a cure-all!



Cedar tea ready to drink

While cedar tea typically has a pleasantly sweet and earthy flavour, it can sometimes be bitter or overly potent, so another plant which can be harvested to make tea even in the dead of winter is sumac. Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*), also known as velvet sumac or stag's horn sumac, is a species of deciduous shrub that is native to North America, the Middle East, Europe, and the Mediterranean. These hardy shrubs are drought tolerant, spread by seeds and rhizomes, and grow along the edge of woods and banks, thriving in poor soil, typically reaching between five and 15 feet in height. While exotic looking plants, it is actually the upright clusters of crimson red berries (called drupes) covered in fine hairs that gets harvested for culinary purposes, usually in Middle Eastern cuisine. Berries are dried and ground into a powder and used as a spice rub for lamb, fish, and chicken, or sprinkled on hummus to add colour and zest. For tea purposes though, the berries are kept whole.

We really enjoy making Sumac Sun Tea as it is a hands-off process of extracting the lemony peppery flavour from the berries. Similar to the cold brew coffee process, the berries are removed from the stem,



Harvesting Sumac tree near Smokehouse

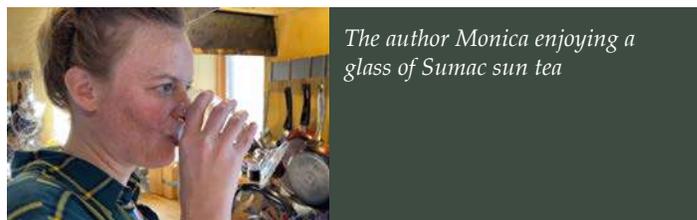
lightly rinsed, submerged in water, and steeped in direct sunlight for at least 30 minutes or up to three hours. The berries are then strained and the tea is ready to enjoy, though we suggest adding a touch of honey as it can sometimes be slightly bitter. This is yet another tea packed full of nutrients, as the sumac berries are high in vitamin A and C, contain antioxidants and gallic acids, boost immunity and 'good' cholesterol, protect cells, and regulate the gut. And best of all, the sun does all of the work!



Straining the Sumac sun tea

So the next time you need a pick-me-up, we encourage you to strap on a pair of snowshoes, explore the wild, edible foods around you, and make yourself a fresh, hot cup of tea on a cold day!

Some of the wild edible recipes mentioned in this article appear in our new cookbook, *Cooking at Wintergreen*, and others can be downloaded by visiting wintergreenstudios.com/wild-edibles. 🌿



The author Monica enjoying a glass of Sumac sun tea

Birds Canada Featured Bird

Pileated Woodpecker

Ian Fife, Ontario Forest Birds Program Coordinator, Birds Canada, Brant Chapter



Pileated Woodpeckers at their cavity nest. Photo Credit: Mick Thompson

Identification

The largest woodpecker in North America is mostly black with a white line extending across the cheek and down the neck, and a white chin patch. The most distinct feature is its bright red crest. The males' crest extends from the base of the bill to the back of the head, whereas the females' begins above the eyes. Males also have a red "moustache". Juveniles look similar to the adults.

Conservation Status

Populations in the eastern part of this species' range have decreased slightly over the past 50 years. The biggest contributor is the removal of large diameter live and dead trees, which eliminates nest and roost sites.

Breeding Biology

In Ontario, the breeding season extends from late April to mid-July. Cavities are excavated in dead or declining live trees in all old-growth forest types. Both adults excavate nest cavities and raise and feed young.

Diet

They rely on carpenter ants all year long, and eat woodboring beetles, wild fruits, and seeds when in season. Pileated Woodpeckers locate ant colonies in the summer and return in the winter to access this dependable resource. At the feeder, they make short work of suet.

Management Guidelines

Guidelines are centred on nest and roost sites. A nest tree is larger in diameter and has one cavity hole. Most roost sites will be found in trees with extensive heart rot and of a smaller diameter. A roost tree will have a hollow chamber

with many cavities to escape predators. Ontario's Tree Marking Guide has extensive management guidelines for Pileated Woodpecker and can be found on the OWA website.

Did You Know?

The word "pileated" means "capped," which refers to the red crest on the top of this bird's head.

Because of the size of feeding cavities created by Pileated Woodpeckers, they have been known to cut down trees and telephone poles.

All woodpeckers have a long (up to 4 inches), barbed or sticky tongue they use to pull insects out of the tree. Their retracted tongue wraps all the way around their skull.

All woodpeckers have a reinforced skull structured to spread the force of impact and a cushioned brain. However, the direction of impact is important as they are just as susceptible to window collisions as other birds.

Venison Meat Pie (Tourtière)



By Andrew Rochon, Executive Chef & Food Editor/Travel Contributor, Ontario OUT of DOORS

The woodlands of Ontario are home to a wonderful variety of large game animals that make fantastic table fare. Whether you enjoy hunting the majestic moose in Northern Ontario or the timid whitetail in cut cornfields in the East, the recipes and methods to cook these organic, free range animals are endless.

This classic French-Canadian dish is a perfect cold weather staple in our household. The addition of some pork will help keep the pie juicy, as venison meat is quite lean. Feel free to use your own mix of wild game. Elk, bison, caribou are all excellent substitutes as well!

Ingredients (makes two pies)

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 large onion (diced)
- 4 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 lb ground venison
- 1 lb ground pork
- 1 lb ground veal
- ½ L Beef stock
- 2 tbsp. ground sage
- 3 tbsp. ground allspice
- 2 cups Ritz crackers (crushed)
- Salt & pepper (to taste)
- 2 x 10" pie shells with lids
- 2 eggs (beaten)

Directions:

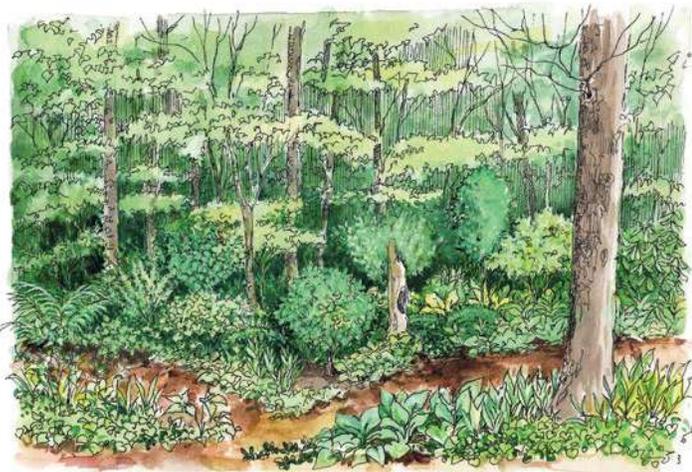
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F
- Heat olive oil on medium heat in pot. Sauté onions and garlic for 5 minutes.
- Add ground venison, pork, and veal. Brown for 5-6 minutes.
- Pour in beef stock and season with sage and allspice.
- Simmer for 10-15 minutes on medium heat.
- At Ritz cracker crumbs to help absorb some of the liquid (if your mixture seems too runny, add an additional cup of Ritz cracker crumbs)
- Season with salt and pepper. Allow mixture to cool.
- Evenly spread tourtière filling into each pie shell.
- Cover with lid and fork the edges closed. Make a few 1" slits in the middle of the pie to allow steam to escape. Brush top with beaten egg.
- If consuming at a later date, plastic-wrap tightly and freeze.
- Place tourtière in the preheated oven and bake for 40-50 mins, until pie dough is flakey and golden colored.
- Remove from oven, drizzle with ketchup, and enjoy!

Growing Food in the Forest

By Luke Kastelic, Bartram Woodlands, OWA Provincial

My forestry education began after a series of abrupt life changes stemming from the concern for the declining natural environment, and a perception that this all resulted from an unhealthy chasm growing between nature and the culture of my birth.

Dropping out of school, I spent time on various organic farms and working odd jobs between the East Coast and Southern Ontario. I was attempting to gain some first-hand connection with the land that I felt had been denied me, having spent my life to that point immersed in books and theoretical abstractions. Somewhere in that desperate whirlwind, I found a book: two volumes of theoretical abstractions—in which I became thoroughly immersed! This book was called *Edible Forest Gardens* by Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier (Chelsea Green Pub. Co., 2005). Mercifully, the entire second volume was related to practice and design. However, even the theory interested me. *Edible Forest Gardens* posits that it is possible to design a functioning ecosystem that perennially produces food and medicine with minimal work after establishment.



Illustrated by Elayne Sears courtesy of *Edible Forest Gardens*, Chelsea Green Publishing

The idea is not a new one: renowned permaculturist Geoff Lawton of Australia has spent much of his career studying the concept of food forests. He has found notable examples of these food-providing ecosystems that have been passed through families and communities over many generations.

One of the oldest sites was a 2,000-year-old food forest built in Morocco that still produces bananas, dates,

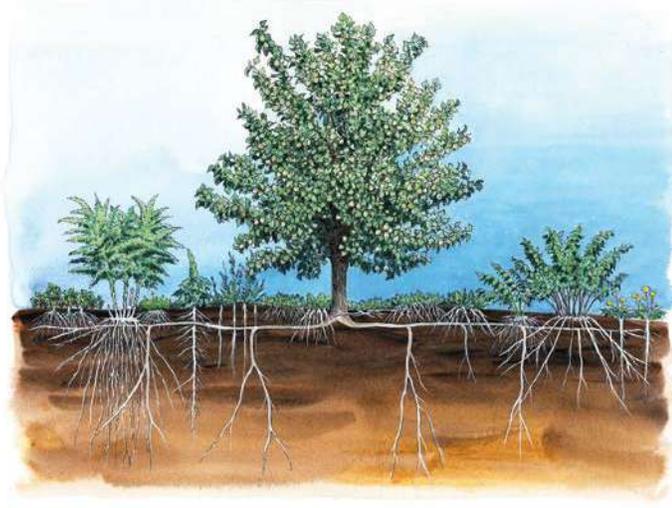
pomegranates, figs, olives, and many other delicious foods. These foods are used by 800 members of the community (<https://youtu.be/NKIgqa49rMc>). In Vietnam, there is a 300-year-old ecosystem managed to produce food, medicine and even game. This ecosystem has been passed through one family for 28 generations and to this day provides the majority of the current family's needs for food and medicine (<https://youtu.be/xZO0Nco2t5g>).

In Charles C. Mann's book "1491: New Revelations of the America's Before Columbus" (Knopf, 2005), he writes that the forests of the Americas, rather than being pristine wilderness unsullied by humans, were intensively managed to produce food. In North America, chestnut trees were favored as mast for the passenger pigeon and encouraged to proliferate. Pregnant deer were favored in the hunt to keep the deer population lower as they would compete with the pigeons for chestnuts. The end result were flocks of passenger pigeons that would literally black out the skies for days and made for very easy hunting. It is thought that the saying "hitting two birds with one stone" comes from the ease with which these flocking birds could be hunted. The arrival of European settlers, not used to living in such an integrated way with the ecosystem, saw these pigeons and eventually hunted them to extinction.

Jacke and Toensmeier bring this idea even closer to home. They suggest the easiest route is to intensively manage forests that are already producing perennial food sources, gradually adding more food and medicine producing species to the understory. They also include information on how to start a forest garden from scratch. The methods proposed always suggest using natural interventions if any site preparation is needed. For example, if a certain plant has high nitrogen requirement, they recommend that nitrogen fixing plants are planted in the vicinity. Or if starting from scratch and the soil requirements call for higher calcium, they recommend planting a "dynamic accumulator", a plant with a deep tap root that will draw nutrients from mineral soil up to the surface.

Volume 2 of the book has an extensive appendix of 626 temperate climate plants that produce food, or medicine, or fill an important ecological niche. Included in this appendix is information about hardiness zones, moisture requirements, pH, form, root patterns, a whole matrix of uses and functions, and also information

on drawbacks (most important to forest managers in Southern Ontario; whether or not a species is invasive).



Illustrated by Elayne Sears courtesy of Edible Forest Gardens, Chelsea Green Publishing

I was referred to this book while picking weeds on an organic farm by a fellow transient intern and it held my interest over the following year. In fact, it eventually inspired me to go off to college and then university to study forestry. I had been hoping to learn even more about the ecology of the place that I live, while simultaneously being able to earn a living.

Working in forestry in Southern Ontario has given me an opportunity to feel more connected to the natural world, but it has also shown me the dire state that ecosystems are in now. Much more than the current plague, I am concerned with the looming consequences of global warming and its effect on food security. Industrial agriculture is the principal cause of deforestation in Canada and relies heavily on the predictable climate we have so far enjoyed as a civilization. Producing high-yielding, food-producing ecosystems is one actionable way of dealing with these issues. Forest managers and woodlot owners alike are provided with a great toolkit in Edible Forest Gardens to begin considering how it might look to put this idea into practice. 🌱

All fungi are edible, but some fungi are edible only once...

— Terry Pratchett

Handy Firewood Crates

By John Ferguson, Glen Gordon Farms Ltd., Glengarry County, Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Chapter

We have been using firewood crates for many years to store and move firewood. The crates have evolved over the years with small improvements, but the original design remains basically the same. We start with 40" x 48" hardwood pallets that have 3" x 4" outside runners. We purchase these pallets used and they often only require a few repairs to make them suitable for crates. We have always used full dimension hemlock lumber for the corner posts and side slats. Hemlock offers the best strength vs. weight and has proven to withstand weather very well even if the crates are stored outside. The corner posts are cut to 48" high as this works out to be the equivalent of one 16" face cord. Quarter inch (1/4") carriage bolts secure the corner posts to each other and to the pallet. A chain and S hook allows one end of the crate to be opened for easier access or dumping. We now use deck screws instead of nails to fasten the side slats. Metal corner gussets and diagonal braces add stability allowing the crates to be stacked. We can stack the crates two high outdoors if they are off the ground slightly (to prevent the pallets from rotting), or three high if they are indoors on concrete.



Empty firewood crate

Stacked firewood in crates

We now have approximately 100 of these crates in use and still have most of the original ones we built. Although a lot of our firewood is sold in bulk dump loads, we like the crates for longer term storage and for customers who want to pick up small quantities themselves. All of the wood that we burn ourselves is handled in crates, allowing us to easily move the wood to where we need it. We use a tractor with forks on the front-end loader to move the crates. 🌱

Editor's Note: This article was not ready in time for Volume 101 of The Ontario Woodlander; however it nicely complements the firewood fuel theme of that issue.

Happy to See... Buckthorn?

By Kate Hayday, *Maker's Dozen, Quinte Chapter*

When I forage in our woods, my goal is impossible math: can I remove something and give something back at the same time?

Foraging for invasive species is one of the best ways I have found to achieve this. There is one invasive plant in particular I forage for here, not for food, but for colour. And that plant is common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*).

Many woodlot owners are familiar with this aggressive plant. It shows up early to the party and stays late, budding out in the early spring and holding on to its leaves well after everyone else has called it a season. Buckthorn does not play fair, but it can work beautifully—out of the woods, and in the maker's workshop.

I currently have three favourite foraging uses for buckthorn: as basket handles, as dye, and as ink.

A-Tisket A-Tasket, Buckthorn Makes a Basket

There is something very pleasing about a basket with a natural handle, and when we make harvest baskets, we often finish them with a buckthorn handle. Buckthorn wood is strong and sturdy enough to hold a full load of summer squash without breaking a sweat. I find a good-sized straight-ish branch to form the handle and use a draw shave to peel off the bark and give it a smooth finish. But hold on to that bark because we are not done with it yet.



Basket with Buckthorn handle

Dyeing with Buckthorn Bark

Into the dye pot the buckthorn bark goes! Dried buckthorn bark can be used to dye wool roving (unspun strands of wool fibre). With different treatments, it yields two very distinct colours: a ruddy pink and a mustard yellow. I source undyed/light coloured wool roving from local farmers and dye it for needle-felting (using notched needles to interlock wool fibers to form a more condensed material). The yellow in the little bee in this photo is made with buckthorn bark. Wool takes up the colour from buckthorn bark without needing a mordant (a substance that combines with a dye or stain and thereby fixes it in a material), meaning all you need to give the mustard colour a try at home is bark, wool, and water. I have not yet done rigorous tests, but I have generally found the dyed wools to be surprisingly colour and lightfast.

Achieving the yellow versus the pink colour comes down to how you process your bark, specifically how alkaline you make your solution. Bark simply boiled will yield the mustardy yellow colour, but if fermented and kept alkaline, the same bark will yield a rich rose pink.

Boiled Buckthorn for Mustard Yellow

- 50 grams of dried buckthorn bark
- 100 grams of wool roving (no mordant needed)
- *amounts can be adjusted, so long as the proportions stay roughly the same (e.g. 2:1 wool to bark)
- Place buckthorn bark in a non-reactive (e.g. stainless steel) saucepan.
- Pour boiling water over the bark and leave it to sit overnight.
- The next day simmer the bark gently for an hour.
- Wet your wool fibre.
- Strain the bark out of the pot and add the damp fibre to the dye water.
- Let the fibre sit in the mixture for an hour or longer without stirring. Let the fibre cool, and then rinse. Make sure you are not changing the temperature of the wool with your rinse water or it may felt.



A Bee made with wool dyed with Buckthorn

Fermented Buckthorn for Ruddy Rose

- 100 grams dried buckthorn bark
- 100 grams wool roving (no mordant needed)
- Washing soda (I buy mine from Home Hardware)
- Water
- pH paper (if not available, google how to make a natural pH tester from cabbage!)
- 1L+ bucket or large mason jar
- Mix 1 tsp of washing soda with 100 ml of hot water. Add to your container. (N.B. - In dealing with an alkaline solution protective equipment such as goggles, and gloves should be used.)
- Top up your container to the 1L mark with cool water.
- Add 100 grams of buckthorn bark. Stir well and place the lid on top. Do not seal tightly, as fermentation could cause it to burst.
- Test the pH. Ensure it is around 9+ and add more washing soda if needed, 1 tsp at a time. Always dissolve your soda first in a bit of hot water before adding it to the mixture.
- For a week or two, check the pH each day to ensure it is 9+. If it is not, add more dissolved washing soda to keep the mixture alkaline.
- After a couple of weeks fermenting the buckthorn, wet your wool thoroughly in cool water and add it to your container. Make sure your wool is fully submerged in the liquid.
- Check on your wool every few days, continuing to test and maintain your pH at 9+. Remove and rinse the wool once you are happy with the colour. It can take as long as a few weeks to develop good colour.

(Dye recipes adapted from wildcolours.co.uk)

Wild Inks from Buckthorn Bark and Berries

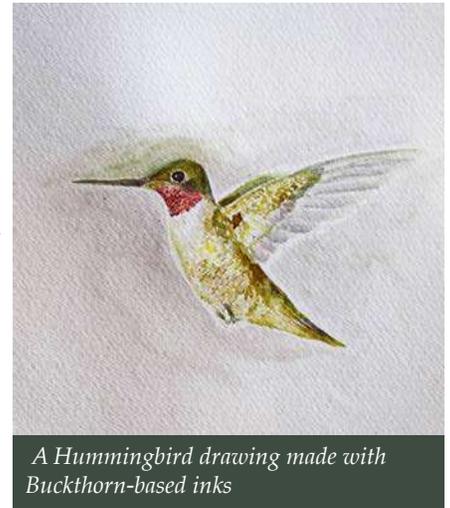
Besides mustard yellow and ruddy rose, buckthorn has even more colours to offer including purple, green, and brown wild inks. I make a brown wild ink very simply, just by cooking the bark until I have cooking water that looks like it will stain the page (test by dipping a piece of paper into the solution).

Buckthorn berries are absolutely stuffed with colours. On their own, crushed buckthorn berries

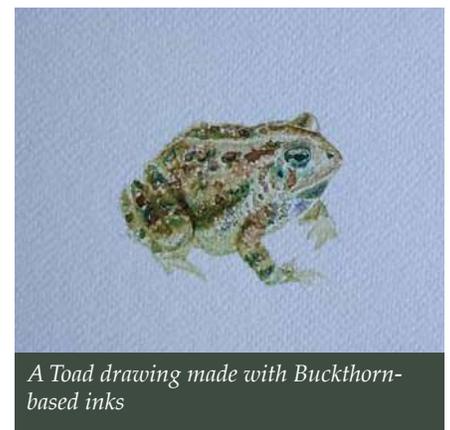
yield a purple hue that will stain everything, including you. This wild juice can be used full strength or thinned with water as a “wild ink” for paintings. Like the bark, there is amazing colour alchemy when you begin changing the pH of the juiced berries. Made alkaline, the colour of the juiced berries will change dramatically to a green tone. The strongest way to do this is by adding a few drops of a lye solution to your juiced berries. As lye is very caustic, all safety gear should be used, and precautions must be taken before attempting this. Though you will need to add much more, and your ink may get very thick in the process, you can also attempt to shift the colour by adding different alkaline ingredients, such as washing or baking soda.

If desired, natural wild inks can be made more viscous by adding gum arabic (available at art supply stores). I extend the life of my homemade wild inks by storing them in the fridge. If you are interested in making your own inks, the wonderful book “Make Ink” by Jason Logan is definitely the place to start.

Other fabric and ink artists have experimented with coaxing even more colours from buckthorn’s bark, leaves and berries—next time you cull buckthorn from your woods, try your own experiments! I would love to hear what rainbows you find in your foraging. Happy Make-ing!



A Hummingbird drawing made with Buckthorn-based inks



A Toad drawing made with Buckthorn-based inks

Chaga Cultivation Offers Potential, Environmentally Friendly, Income for Woodlot Owners

By Jonathan Murray, Co-Founder, President, Forage Hyperfoods Inc., Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter

Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*) is a type of mushroom that grows mainly on birch trees in northern Europe, Asia, Canada, and the northeastern United States. With a golden amber core, this mushroom could be an exciting new opportunity for cultivation by woodlot owners. Such an endeavour has the potential to provide sustainable income and at the same time be environmentally and ecologically friendly.

With the consistent and prominent use of Chaga in Asian cultures, many of the natural reserves have been exhausted.* Unlike other medicinal mushrooms, a commercial practice to farm Chaga in a greenhouse or manufacturing facility is not feasible. Some companies have begun to market a chaga-like product that is

grown on rice or oats and put into a powder. This practice does not create the nutrient dense food that customers expect when consuming Chaga.

Harvestable Chaga mushroom can take between five and seven years to grow making a sustainable harvesting practice critical. Forage Hyperfoods Inc. is an Ontario based company that is implementing a sustainable farming method for the Canadian Chaga industry; strict harvesting instructions and a method of seeding the forest.

Strict Harvesting

Forage is currently the largest Canadian supplier of wild Canadian Chaga, serving thousands of



White Birch in fall

customers worldwide. We have one of the largest networks of independent harvesters in the world, across Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick. In line with a strict policy for sustainability we have signed agreements with all of our harvesters that require them to leave at least 30% of the Chaga on the host, and to take all necessary precautions to prevent any damage to the tree.

Seeding the Forest

Forage, along with international research partners, have developed a safe method of seeding the forest with Chaga. We first grow Chaga mycelium (seeding structure) in our facility on wood dowels, then implant mature birch trees. With an average life span of a birch tree being 40-50 years, we instruct our harvesters to only seed mature trees. We can then expect two to three harvests per tree before its natural lifecycle comes to an end.

Ontario and Canada could develop and have a controlling share in a lucrative industry with Chaga mushrooms with the adoption of sustainable harvesting and seeding of our forests. If carried-out in the right way, as the demand continues to climb world-wide, Canada's supply of wild chaga mushrooms will begin to grow significantly within five years as competitive regions in Europe and Asia begin to exhaust.

Health and Medicinal Benefits

Chaga has been used for many years as a natural medicine to stimulate the immune system, reduce inflammation and prevent/treat cancer. This mushroom has been the focus of over 100 clinical studies where in vitro, chaga has demonstrated antitumor, anti-mutagenic, antiviral, antiplatelet, antidiabetic, antioxidant, and analgesic effects.* Further research is required to prove out the efficacy of chaga or chaga based treatments for infections or diseases. As a result of COVID-19, the search for natural immune boosting foods and supplements increased significantly. Chaga mushrooms were used by many for their potential antiviral properties, as an easy additive to their daily routine, whether by tea, coffee blend or pill extract.

Medicinal mushrooms such as Chaga are among the most nutrient dense foods in the world; a reason why the growth in the adoption in these products will not be a passing trend. Our ancestors have used mushrooms as medicine for thousands of years. Ötzi, the Ice Man, who lived nearly 5300 years ago, carried amadou and a birch polypore tethered in a pouch to help him survive in the Alps of northern Italy.

The OWA and Forage Hyper Foods Inc. are now exploring opportunities to partner in this exciting new venture. If there are any members with mature birch stands in their woodlots, and you are interested in trying something new and different with chaga that eventually could lead to a sustainable harvest with revenue, please visit Chaga.ca for more information, or contact the OWA office directly.



Chaga chunks

OWA Disclaimer:

The OWA does not have expertise in herbal or fungal supplements and is not in a position to corroborate or endorse the health and medicinal benefits of chaga. People considering ingesting chaga for the first time should check with their healthcare provider. There can be side effects in some instances.

* <https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/integrative-medicine/herbs/chaga-mushroom> 🍄

Edible Wild Delicacies and Delights

By Monica Capovilla, Executive Director, Wintergreen Studios, Limestone Chapter

As the world sheltered in place in the spring of 2020, we began to devote more time to our gardens, both cultivated and wild. We planned more native plantings for our bees and paid more attention to the forageable wild food that was right under our noses. One of the few good things to come out of a global pandemic is that it invited us to slow down, take a breath, and explore that which grows around us—and take it into our kitchen to create delicious gourmet meals. The 100-mile diet? More like 100 feet!

There was a time when we would see dandelions peeking between the stones on the Lodge porch at Wintergreen Studios and think, “weeds!” but now we think, “lunch!”. Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), also known as blowball, wet-a-bed, Irish daisy, or wild endive, is a flowering perennial plant that likely evolved over 30 million years ago. They are native to Eurasia and widespread throughout temperate North America, growing in fields and places with disturbed soil. Their seeds are wind dispersed and they germinate easily, making them a prolific food source!

Not only are dandelions an incredibly vital early spring nectar source for pollinators, including the honey bees found in the 9th Meadow Apiary at Wintergreen, but they are also packed full of nutrients—they can just be as nutritious as more commonly known leafy greens like spinach and kale. Dandelion greens contain high amounts of vitamins A, C, and K, and moderate sources of calcium, potassium, iron, and manganese. All of that, free for the foraging, in our backyards!

Though they are commonly considered an invasive species and can be annoyingly pervasive (if we had a nickel for every time we have seen people weeding dandelions from their front lawns, we would be rich!), the entire plant is edible. The leaves, the flowers, the stems, the roots. The leaves (young leaves are preferable to avoid bitterness) and stems are delicious sautéed or added to soups, the roots can be roasted and ground as a coffee substitute (in flavour), the flowers can be eaten raw (rinsed well) and tossed into salads for a pop of colour and surprising sweetness, or the petals can be used to make wine or infused vinegar, among other things. Our favourite? Both the leaves and flowers added alongside cheddar cheese, heavy cream, eggs, and cherry tomatoes in a Latvian-inspired Dandelion

Flower Omelette. Top it off with a little bit of Garlic Mustard Pesto and you have got your yourself an incredibly tasty and hearty breakfast.



Dandelion flower omelette

“Wait... garlic mustard pesto? That is, uh, unusual.” Perhaps. But is it delicious and easily sourced? You bet! The idea of consuming garlic mustard, known to be aggressively invasive, may sound strange but trust us—once you learn more about its nutritional benefits (and tasted its fresh, garlicky notes), you will be wishing it was spring.

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), also known as hedge garlic, Jack by the hedge, or poor man’s garlic, is an extremely hardy biennial flowering plant native to Europe and parts of Asia and Africa. It was brought to North America in the early 1800s by European settlers who used it for food and medicine. The entire plant is edible (its leaves are often used as a flavouring in salads, soups, dips, sauces, and fish) and is one of the oldest spices used in Europe, dating back to 4100 BCE in Germany and Denmark. It contains substantial amounts of vitamins A, C, E, and some B vitamins as well as potassium, calcium, magnesium, selenium, copper, iron, manganese, and omega-3 fatty acids.

As with many non-native species, garlic mustard is invasive and is now one of Ontario’s most aggressive forest invaders as its seeds spread easily and can grow almost anywhere—in stable forests or in newly disturbed soil, in deep shade or full sunlight. All by way of saying, it is very abundant and can be harvested at will. Every summer we admire the beautiful, lush patch of garlic mustard that tumbles

its way down the glade beyond the Hobbit House, knowing it will soon become a delicious pesto. We would not usually use the words ‘beautiful’ and ‘lush’ in the same sentence as garlic mustard, given its invasive nature, but when we are talking about harvesting it for food, the more the better!



Garlic mustard growing beside Hobbit House at Wintergreen Studios

We recommend seeking out second-year garlic mustard plants before they flower for the freshest flavour and best results. Second-year plants (in early to mid-spring) can be anywhere from one foot to almost three feet tall with alternating broad, kidney-shaped leaves on the lower half (up to 10 centimetres across) and more triangular leaves (five to 10 centimeters across), narrowing toward the tip. Simply pluck the leaves (the younger the better), rinse well, and toss into a food processor with olive oil, garlic, nuts (we like the earthiness of walnuts), parmesan cheese, salt, and pepper. Blitz until well blended but still chunky and voilà—pesto from your



Garlic mustard leaves and flowers in colander

own backyard (or other nearby green space)! Serve over pasta or steamed fish, slather on flatbreads, or add to tomato soup for a pop of flavour.



Pasta with garlic mustard pesto

Disclaimer: if you are harvesting garlic mustard, learn how to properly do so as to reduce its impact and prevent it from spreading to other native areas. As it is an aggressively invasive species, one plant can generate thousands of seeds, which remain viable up to 12 years, and stands of garlic mustard can double in size every four years. It is best to pull up the plant by its roots otherwise it can displace many native wildflower species, such as trilliums and trout lilies, by interfering with the growth of fungi that bring nutrients to their roots. While tempting to throw them into the compost bin or nearby areas, we recommend instead disposing of the plant in the garbage as discarded flowers may still produce seeds.

We encourage you to take the time to adjust your relationship with what are referred to as ‘weeds’ (or as we like to say, ‘free food!’), explore the green spaces around you, and harvest safely. Rule of thumb: when in doubt, do not put it in your mouth. There are many reputable field guides, apps such as iNaturalist, and communities of experts that can help you identify wild plant species. So head outside, keep it local, and know before you eat.

Some of the wild edible recipes mentioned in this article appear in our new cookbook, *Cooking at Wintergreen*, and others can be downloaded by visiting wintergreenstudios.com/wild-edibles. 🌿

Ever eat a pine tree? Many parts are edible.

— Euell Gibbons

Kawartha Chapter Outreach Programs

By Eleanor Reed RPF, Kawartha Chapter

The OWA Kawartha Chapter is continuing several programs in 2021, that it has offered in the past to benefit members. This includes a Forest Primer Consultation Program, a Country Lane Maple Program, and a Butternut Tree Program. These initiatives are being undertaken in partnership with several individuals and organizations, and only Kawartha Chapter members are eligible to participate.

Forest Primer Consultation Program 2021

In partnership with local member consultants, the Chapter has arranged a special discounted consultation service. For the reasonable price of only \$150+HST, the Chapter's members can receive a half-day Forest Primer Consultation. During the consultation, a qualified professional will walk with the member in their woodlot and provide professional advice for its management and information about available programs and services to help.



Forest Professional visiting a woodlot for consultation

The consultant will answer questions about:

- forest ecology, dynamics, and tree species
- tree planting and harvesting
- wood products and values
- wildlife habitat features and consideration
- threats such as insects and diseases
- invasive species
- best management practices and available resources

Country Lane Maple Program—2021

In 2021, the Kawartha Chapter will be enhancing its Country Lane Maple Program by partnering with

Maple Leaves Forever. The Chapter will offer an additional grant of up to \$250 on top of Maple Leaves Forever's 25% rebate for approved trees. Kawartha Chapter members will be provided with a simple step by step process to participate in this worthwhile initiative.



Maples along a bucolic lane in the fall

2021 - Butternut Tree Program (Butternut Buds)

Butternut trees across North America are being infected by a fungus known as Butternut Canker. Butternut Canker is a fungal disease that spreads quickly and can kill a tree within a few years. Butternuts are designated as endangered and protected under Ontario's Endangered Species Act. The Kawartha Chapter is partnering with the Forest Gene Conservation Association to provide potentially disease resistant Butternut seedlings to Chapter members.

Kawartha Chapter members who enroll in the program will receive instructions in April regarding seedling pick up. Trees must be planted on the member's private property. Each tree is valued at \$30, but Kawartha Chapter members will pay \$15 (upon pick-up) and may purchase a maximum of five trees. Note the mother tree has been DNA tested.

If any other Chapters are feeling inspired to develop and offer similar specialized programs to engage their members, please feel free to contact the Kawartha Chapter and we will be happy to share our experience in getting things up and running and making them work!



Butternut twig and bud

You can email Kawartha Chapter at: eleanorreed@xplornet.com 📧

Revisiting 100-year-old Research Plots

By Steve D'Eon, Renfrew and County Chapter • steve.deon@canada.ca

At the Canadian Forest Service's Petawawa Research Forest (PRF) some of the 200+ Permanent Sample Plots (PSPs) have been continuously monitored and measured for 100 years. These centurions have recorded a century of forest processes, growth, mortality, and management impacts. PSP001 is the oldest continuously monitored forest research plot in Canada (Figure 1).



Figure 1: PSP001, established in 1918, was part of the Canadian Institute of Forestry 2019 Annual General Meeting field tour.

Since 1918 the methodology to establish a PSP has remained the same. A plot is carefully laid out on the forest floor, corner posts are hammered in, and each tree is tagged, measured, and mapped (Figure 2).

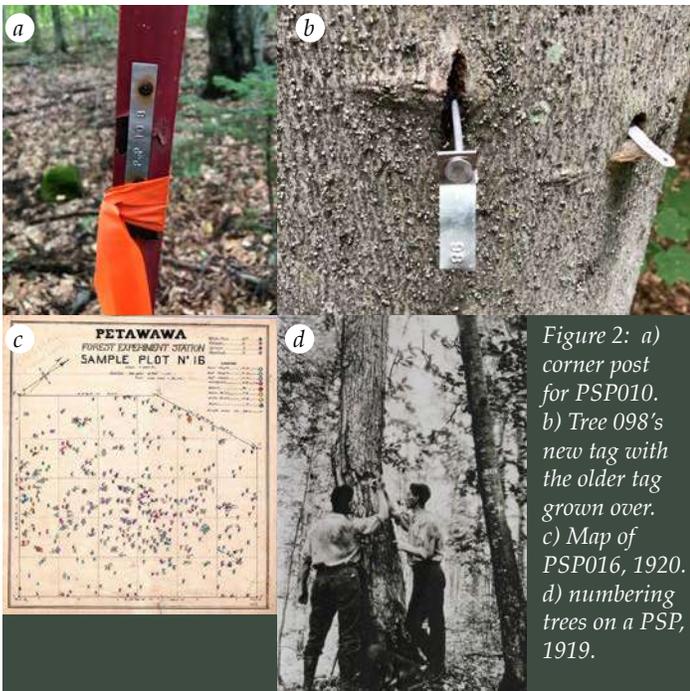


Figure 2: a) corner post for PSP010. b) Tree 098's new tag with the older tag grown over. c) Map of PSP016, 1920. d) numbering trees on a PSP, 1919.

Pencils and paper were the tools of the trade during this era. The original tally sheets, the paper now brittle and showing its age, have survived multiple trips out to the bush (Figure 3). As the PSP series grew upkeep of plot infrastructure, as well as periodic measurements, became a right-of-passage for students at Petawawa each summer.

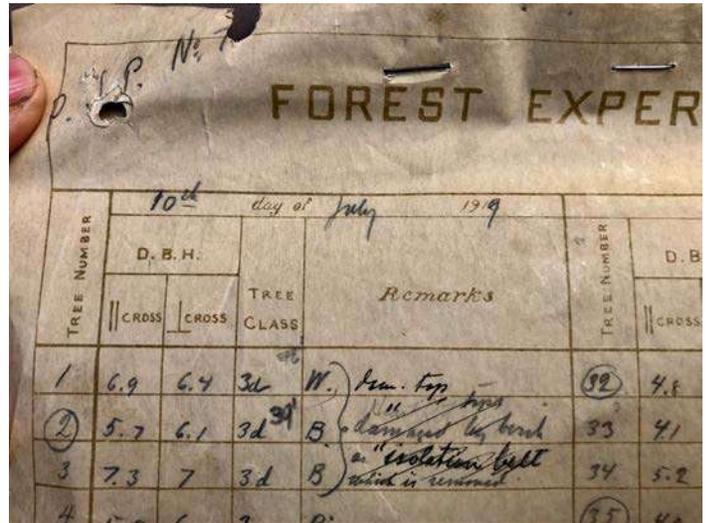


Figure 3: PSP007 tally sheet dated July 10, 1919.

Thinking back, one realizes measurements made in 1918 and 1919 took place during the Spanish flu pandemic. It was a bit ironic for me to join the PRF's Melissa Vekeman and Céline Lafrance measuring some centurions this fall; 2020 being during the COVID 19 pandemic. Pandemic aside, it was exciting as we socially distanced our way across a couple of plots using the data to track 100 years of growth and survival of individual trees (Figure 4).



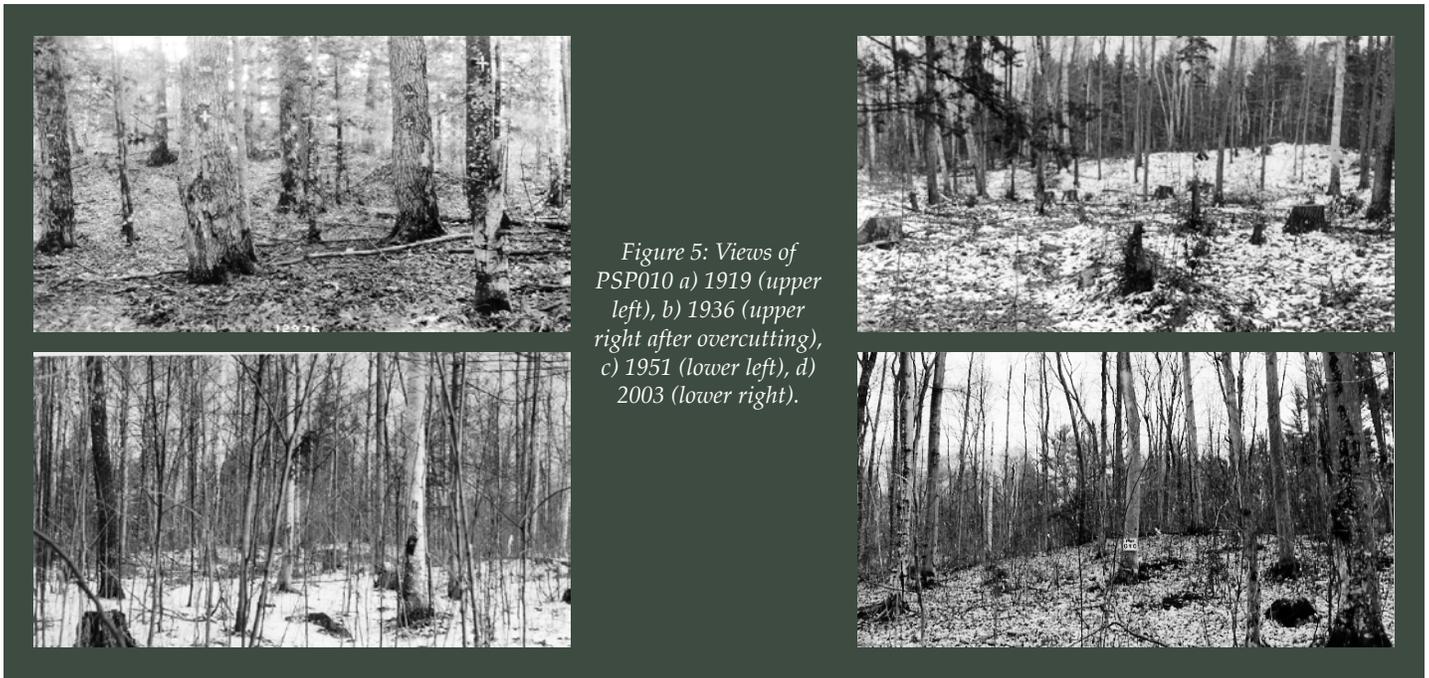
Figure 4: Left) measuring the current diameter of PSP016 tree number 410. Right) indicating the 1926 diameter (9.1 cm dbh) of PSP016 tree number 140.

continued next page ...

The PSP database consists of thousands of measurements of individual trees spread over several hundred plots. The repeated measurements draw your focus to review each tree’s growth and survival over time. For example, on PSP010 only 70 of the original 372 living trees were still alive in 2020. Ingrowth, new trees that have grown to 3.5” dbh since the plot was established, replace those that passed on. The beech, now 160 years old, are showing signs of decline. Beech

bark disease is an approaching threat.

One should not forget the true value of PSPs is the sum of the individuals. The diary for PSP010 reads, “plot established in 60-year-old (1859) beech-maple-birch with 165-year-old (1754) maple overstory. Stand had been highgraded and grazed by cattle.” The original large low-quality maple are visible in Figure 5(a).



The plot scale metrics for PSP010 show the impact of time on species composition (transition to mostly beech), stem density (decreasing), and average diameter (increasing since the 1933 cut) (Table 1). The diary described the 1933 harvest as “overcut due to lack of supervision”. The long-term data indicate it has taken many years to recover from this overcutting with the basal area stabilizing and maximum tree size returning to the original values after 1998.

As I slipped my COVID-19 mask off and prepared to leave the PRF, I was reminded of how diligent our predecessors had to be for a plot to survive 100 years. The corner post to PSP019 had been knocked over in a recent harvest. I notified Melissa’s crew so they could re-establish the post. These plots are part of a working research forest so diligence in measurement and plot maintenance is important.

Forest processes take place over periods longer than most humans live. These centurion plots give us a

glimpse into what has been happening from before our parents were born.

Table 1.

year	Ave DBH (inches)	Max DBH (inches)	stems/ha	Beech	Sugar maple	White birch	Other	Basal area (m ² /ha)
1919	7.5	20.3	716	40%	21%	19%	19%	34
1929	8.1	21.9	698	44%	24%	16%	16%	39
1939	7.0	15.5	607	56%	13%	15%	16%	23
1951	7.2	16.1	455	70%	12%	6%	12%	18
1962	8.2	17.6	484	66%	14%	5%	14%	25
1973	9.0	19.6	473	72%	14%	5%	9%	29
1983	10.0	20.1	415	74%	14%	5%	7%	31
1993	11.1	20.6	360	77%	14%	3%	6%	32
1998	11.1	21.1	360	78%	14%	2%	6%	33
2016	11.9	24.8	335	83%	13%	0%	4%	36
2020	11.3	26.0	360	80%	16%	0%	4%	36

Table 1: PSP010 metrics 1919 to 2020 for stems over 3.5” (8.89 cm) dbh. Overcutting took place in 1933. Diameter limit harvesting took place in 1951 further impacting stand dynamics. 🌲

Climate Change and Biodiversity focus of December 2020 Forest Seminar (Part 1)

By Tony Bull, President of the Eastern Ontario Model Forest, and Renfrew County Chapter

Introduction

The twin themes of the December Seminar (hosted by the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) and the Ottawa Valley Section of the Canadian Institute of Forestry (CIF)) were planetary threats due to human-induced climate change on one hand and the serious loss of biodiversity evidenced by enhanced extinction rates on the other hand. In the next issue I will explore the seriousness of these challenges and some possible bases for optimism that I have observed in my reading. The Seminar featured three speakers addressing these two urgent environmental challenges.

The Climate Change Challenge

John Pedlar, Canadian Forest Service Forest Landscape Biologist spoke of future climate scenarios and what adaptation can be done to ensure future intact forests. He said that over the last 100 years we have seen already a one-degree centigrade increase in mean temperature.

Looking forward, in a low emission scenario we could see an increase of one to two degrees above the current average. In a high emission scenario, it could be as much as five to nine degrees higher.

With the low emission scenario there would be an increase in precipitation; perhaps 9%. The high emission scenario would bring a big increase in precipitation in the north. But even with higher precipitation the water balance would be drier for Canada due to higher evapo-transpiration rates. Eastern Ontario could be quite dry by the end of the century.

There would also be an increase in weather events such as wind and droughts; late spring frosts; that is, less predictability. In Eastern Ontario, a changed fire zone could make it challenging to keep trees on the landscape. Moreover, forest pests will migrate northwards (as they are doing now).

Anticipating changes in climate it is possible to have assisted migration of species northward or encouraging modest range expansions. It is necessary to examine where seed sources should be accessed for planting.

It is estimated that a four-degree northward movement or a two-degree southward movement would result in a 90% growth response. His work suggests that, on average, seed sources can be moved approximately five degrees northward (i.e., several hundred kilometers in the relatively flat terrain of eastern Canada) before exhibiting growth declines >10% relative to the local seed source.

Forests as a positive influence on climate change

Malcolm Cockwell is the manager of the 40 thousand-hectare Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve on the south west border of Algonquin Park. The overriding mission is "to uphold a strong land ethic". He said that their foresters are united in managing for many benefits; wildlife, water, biodiversity, and so on. The forest is certified to the Forest Stewardship Council® sustainable forest certification system. Of the 10 principles that are adhered to, principle six addresses the all-important biodiversity conservation role of the forest.



Winter Forestry Tour
Photo Credit: Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve Ltd.

Within that context the management of the forest seeks to unlock the value of the many services that the forest provides; recreation, education, research, forest products as examples.

What Malcolm described was the unlocking of the benefit of carbon capture and storage that arises from forest growth.

continued next page ...

In 2017, Haliburton Forest signed with Bluesource, a California-based company that works with managed forests such as Haliburton, to bring their carbon offsets to the market.

How does it work? For their Improved Forest Management (IMF) agreement the payment is based on the degree to which a forest is managed at a stocking level higher than a normal “base” level that is typical of the forest region in which the forest is situated.

It is a long-term agreement; typically ranging from 40 to 100 years. One advantage of this long-term horizon is that a forest under agreement is protected from competing land uses such as housing development or golf course development

Malcolm made clear that to engage in this type of agreement is a huge commitment beyond the usual length of time for such arrangements. It requires extra management activities such as permanent sample plots in order to have detailed information on all aspects of impacts of forest management prescriptions and growth over time.

Payment for entering into the agreement and commitment would be an upfront payment based on the total area of forest to be covered by it.

Forests are both emitters of carbon dioxide and act as sinks. The forest managers are taking steps to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through steps such as limiting the size of landings (which emit methane) and making sure they are reforested. They are also experimenting with lower emission equipment.

Biodiversity and Farming

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report on the State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture describes a worrying decline in biodiversity that both supports agriculture and provides essential ecological services. The report outlines issues such as loss and degradation of forest and aquatic ecosystems.

On the other hand, the report also acknowledges that there is an increase in biodiversity-friendly farming practices in many parts of the world.

Bob Dobson of Dobson Farms north of Cobden has been practicing biodiversity-friendly agriculture for the last 50 years. His great grandfather started the farm in the 1830s. It has been in the family ever since.

He remembers his father clearing fencerows prior to the 1970s in order to create more open land and make farming more efficient. At that time there were support

programs encouraging such practice. Bob remembers feeling uncomfortable at this practice.

Bob showed pictures of the farm and house in the mid 1900s and after he had engaged in a multi-year tree and shrub planting program. He did this planting to diversify the farm environment as part of his change to grass fed beef without the use of chemicals and growth hormones. The change between the two aerial photos is dramatic.

In the original photo the farm buildings and house had no trees near them, and the surrounding land was bare. In the latter photo trees were abundant around the farm buildings and dotted the landscape as well.



Tree Marking Tour
Photo Credit: Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve Ltd.

To date he has planted over thirty thousand trees including some wildlife shrubs. From 1980 to 2010, he planted 1000 trees per year usually in the first week of May. The seedlings, from the Ferguson Forest Centre in Kemptville, include a number of varieties of deciduous and conifers trees.

There are now over two miles of upland shelter belts, two to five rows of trees wide and planted across the prevailing wind. These shelter belts slow down the wind and keep more of the moisture (snow and rain) on the farm. Also, the trees provide windbreak shelter for the livestock and a home for wildlife (birds, snakes, fox etc.) which help control insects and rodents on the farm. The shelter belts consist of 7 species: spruce, cedar, pine, ash, oak, butternut and black walnut.

To solve the problem of decreasing quantity and quality of water, Bob continued fencing the cattle out of the stream and adjacent land over the last few years and a reservoir was dug. The cattle still needed a source of



Treed Riparian Buffer

drinking water, so an in-line gravity trough system was constructed in 1987 to give them access to water while restricting their access to the waterway.

Bob planted approximately one mile of lowland riparian buffer strips on each side of the 2 streams crossing the farm. These two miles of buffer strip plantings provides excellent habitat for many species of wildlife, while at the same time slows down or stops runoff from the fields entering the stream. He finds that the trees as they grow, crack open the heavy clay soil, (sort of like creating a sponge) and more easily allowing the penetration after a heavy rainfall and runoff from the hay or pasture fields.

He has also reduced his herd size and feeds them exclusively on grass and cut hay from his fields; using no fertilizer or chemicals.

Bob is convinced that he now has a much better environmental footprint on his farm. The Ontario Cattlemen's Association was convinced too. In 1994 Bob was the first recipient of their Stewardship Award in recognition of Bob's projects on the farm to enhance and protect waterways as well as create bird and wildlife habitat.

As a final comment, Bob described how he has seen the local climate change over the past decades. He feels that his tree planting is a positive measure to slow down the impact of this challenge.

So, what Bob Dobson does on his farm, both in terms of his biodiversity friendly approach, and in being a place of demonstration to others is an ideal way to make progress that goes beyond the boundaries of his farm.

Similarly, as described by Malcolm Cockwell, the Haliburton Forest, with its strong environmental vision is also a show piece for its many visitors, both recreational and educational.

In these two examples what is done on the land becomes a lesson for many people leading to a more widespread informed and committed populace that support and do the right thing for our threatened environment.

Part 2 will be continued in the June 2021 Issue of The Ontario Woodlander 🌲

The Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter Chainsaw Safety Program

By Pieter Leenhouts and Bruce Rowsell, Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter

Already in 2006, the first year after the founding of the Lower Ottawa Valley (LOV) Chapter there were regular inquiries made to the chapter for chainsaw courses. A year later the chapter held its first chainsaw safety and maintenance course in rural Manotick in the machine shop of a small engines dealer that was then D.K. Dodds. The demand was such that the course program has continued every year since without interruption. At first, just the basic safety and maintenance course was offered and a few years later the chapter expanded its offering to include the Certified Chainsaw Operator Course.

To ensure a proper calibre of training the chapter sought a certified instructor through Workplace Safety North Ontario. Finding an instructor was quite difficult in Eastern Ontario. Most were in the northern forested areas. Very fortunately we found John Ferrier from Perth Ontario—a very experienced woodsman with many years and many stories of his days as a “faller” in British Columbia.

The following year the chainsaw course was moved to the classroom at the Ferguson Forest Centre (FFC) in Kemptville and continued there for a decade. We were truly fortunate to have John as he had his own woodlot where he would hold certified chainsaw courses. The certified courses were weekends long and one learned the basics of how to fell trees safely and fully appreciated the dangers associated to felling trees. After completing the course, it seems you only learned about what you did not know.

The chainsaw safety courses then moved from the FFC to the board room of the Grenville Mutual Insurance Company in Kemptville.

During 2020 the program experienced many changes. The spring sessions were cancelled due to COVID-19. The fall sessions were held with strict adherence to COVID precautions. A Chainsaw Program Committee was formed to provide better guidance of the chainsaw program. It had to deal with big changes. Program delivery, facilities and registration were some of the issues. Committee members are Nancy Young, Alan Ham and Bruce Rowsell who are also chapter board members.

Due to health concerns John Ferrier advised that he could no longer provide instruction for our courses.



LOV Chapter Chainsaw Safety Course adheres to Covid rules

We will miss John and his gentle and effective storytelling style of teaching. We received much positive feedback from the students which only reaffirmed our own appreciation of his style.

Through a contact at the neighbouring Renfrew Chapter, we found a new instructor in Frank Knaapen from Petawawa also a certified instructor who agreed to look after the courses. He has many years of experience as a forester and recently retired as a professor with the Algonquin College forestry program in Pembroke. Many course participants commented that they really enjoyed his instruction and Frank has agreed to instruct again during 2021. He is another real asset to the program.



John and Beth Ferrier

Due to COVID-19 the Grenville Mutual Insurance location was closed. Through another board member, we contacted Geoff McVey, General Manager of Limerick Forest located some 15 km due south of Kemptville to see if their site might be available. We



Presentation of Barred Owl nesting boxes

met with Geoff and his colleague Rob Ross, to plan out our courses. All the fall courses were held very successfully there. Geoff has agreed that the facilities at Limerick Forest will be available again for 2021.

Since they charged no fee for the use of these facilities, the chapter (Bruce) built two Barred owl nest boxes and donated them to Limerick Forest. The plans were obtained from fellow woodlot owner Carson Thompson when he hosted a woodlot tour a few years earlier. A reference for the nest box plans can be found in *The Ontario Woodlander* Issue 92 – Summer / Fall 2018 in the Chapter’s Corner on page 25.

Advancing with the times, this was the first year that we used the WordPress online registration system. It certainly made the registration and payment procedures much easier and more efficient. There are some refinements that we would like to make for 2021.

Our course attendance was:

1. Chainsaw Safety, Maintenance and Sharpening – two sessions on September 21 with a total of 27 registrants.
2. Chainsaw Operations - two sessions on September 26 with a total of 11 registrants

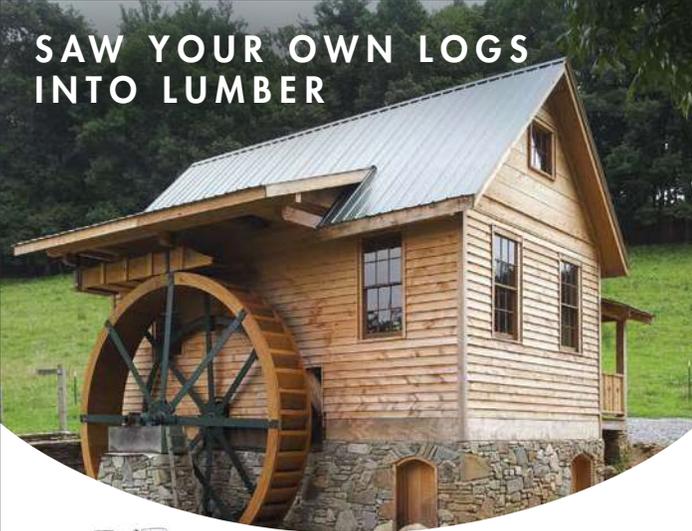
3. Certified Chainsaw Operator - three sessions with a total of 9 registrants.

2021 plans will be very similar to that of 2020, in addition to plans for a course for women. 🧡



Barred Owl nesting box in place

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OWA Virtual Clubs

Two new virtual OWA clubs will be initiated in the coming months, one focusing on all things culinary including cooking demos and recipes (an on-going follow up to this 'forage from the forest' issue), and the other on relevant woodlot and forest stewardship books, including summaries and reviews. If you are interested in helping to lead or be a part of these clubs, please contact John at john.pineau@ontariowoodlot.com or 705-358-4261. Both clubs will be fun and will also help to create great content for future issues of the Woodlander.



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- Kerry Coleman, Lower Ottawa Valley Chapter
- Erica Dixon, York-Durham Chapter
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Submission Deadlines

March issue,
Feb 1, 2021

June issue,
May 1, 2021

September issue,
August 1, 2021

December issue,
November 1, 2021

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Print and digital advertising space is also offered to commercial enterprises. For information contact: info@ont-woodlot-assoc.org

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