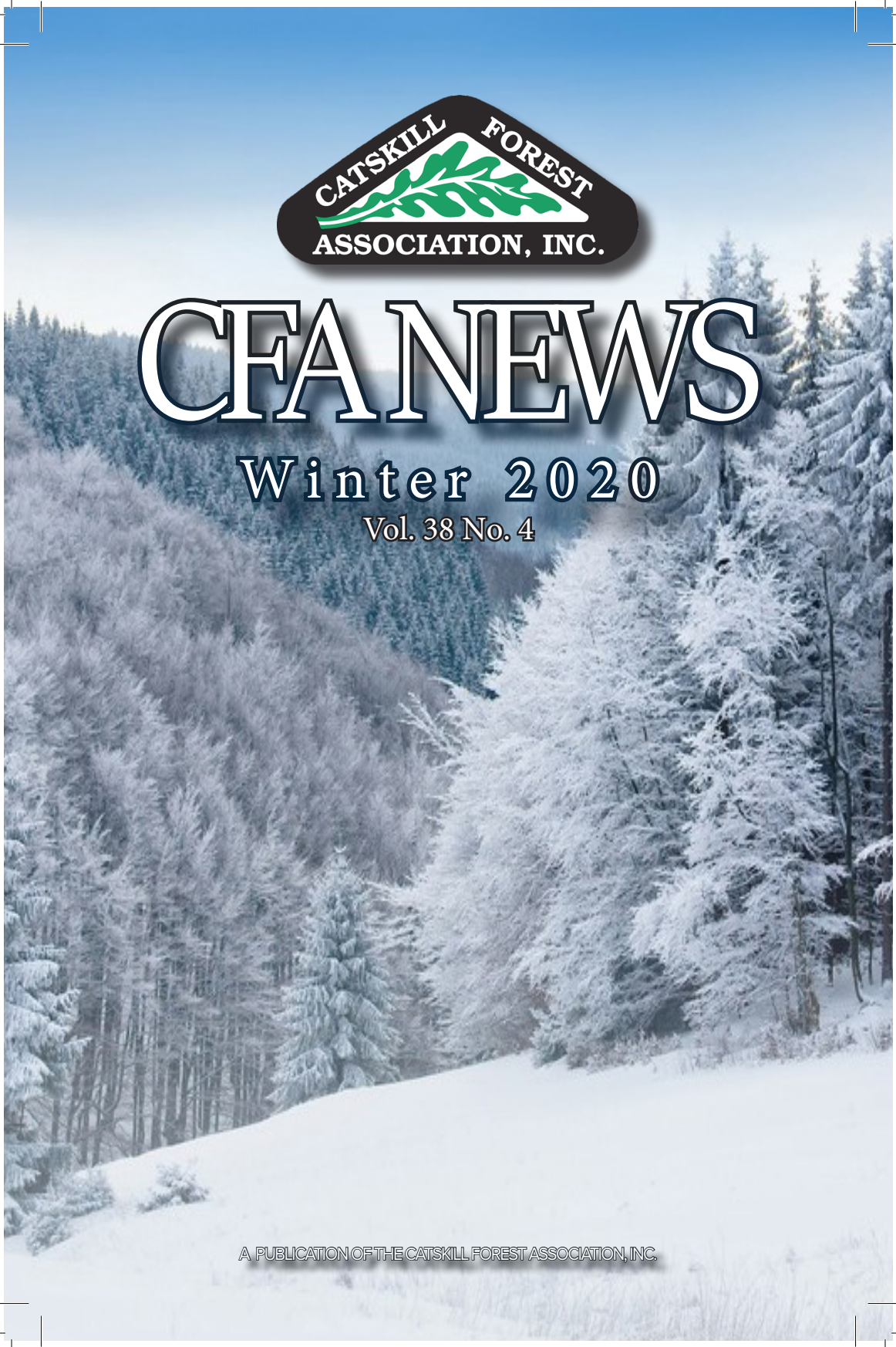

CFA NEWS

Winter 2020
Vol. 38 No. 4

A PUBLICATION OF THE CATSKILL FOREST ASSOCIATION, INC.

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CFA NEWS

Winter 2020

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From the President's Desk Winter 2020 -

By: Mike Porter

Every so often topics require renewed analysis. This season's newsletter is one of those to me. I want to make a disclaimer at this point that the information and views of this article are not the official position of CFA nor is there very much chance that this position will be adopted by anyone, anywhere any time soon. These views are only possibilities if NYS legislators come to the realization that the time has come for updating the Forest Preserve status.

Change is inevitable. Members of CFA develop a pride in their forestland and often owning their land for a period of time, realize that it is changing in spite of their wishes. Their forest is changing because it is a living organism and each day, month, year and decade it is getting older. This aging is the natural process of forest

succession. If you plan is to simply enjoy your forest for what it is, after years of aging it will be different no matter what your wishes. Small trees will become bigger, shade intolerant trees will be dying and disappearing and undergrowth may be disappearing.

You notice this happening and, as a member of CFA, contact one of the foresters to discuss this change. You want your forest the way it was and the recommendation is to "manage" your land in order to reverse, slow or stop succession. The solution includes recommendations to cut trees to open the canopy, remove new species that have "invaded" your forest as it aged and maybe plant species that were present when you originally purchased your land. The end result would be, in addition to getting some of your original species back, the return of wildlife you had developed fondness for in your original forest. The prognosis is that with lots of work and time you might be able to enjoy your woods as before. Do you have the time or ambition?

My point!! In 1886 the State of New York amended its constitution to protect lands in both the Catskills and Adirondacks from gross mismanagement by industry and agriculture in the forests of the two regions. As a result of the amendment, large tracts of "mishandled" forest land were protected from further exploitation by the "Forever Wild" clause of a NYS constitutional amendment in perpetuity much the same as you might do on your land when you decide to simply let it grow. These depleted and destroyed forests were to be, in essence, let go as their succession progressed from where it was at that time. The "Forever Wild" clause in the Forest Preserve Act continues to govern large tracts of land in both the Catskills and Adirondacks.

With this protection, the lands began to evolve back to forests almost immediately. The Northeast climate and geology is such that reforestation will occur with little or no effort on human's part. The humidity and soils are perfect for trees to grow. As one might predict, just that has happened. From 1886 to the 1960's the forest preserve of the state reached maturity and the beginning of climax transition. There was abundant wildlife living in the forest. There was lots of food, lots of shelter and plenty of available water, the lifeblood of the Northeast.

In the '60's and '70's another land use phase began. The widespread dairy farm industry was changed forever by the advent of the bulk milk delivery system. Many small farms that delivered milk in 10 gallon milk cans by truck could not afford the transition to bulk service and many of the marginal farms that might have made it had to cease operations because bulk milk trucks couldn't get to their farms.

Welcome, New Members!

Jeffrey Keefer
Ryan Scully
Joe Burrascano
Ray Arnone
Tom Sperber
Carmen Montes de Oca
Jennie Romer
Amber Bravo
Darrell Hartman
Tom Orlando
Justin Champa
Alex Sharp
Daniel Ellen
Howard France
Jamie Buckner
Amy Schaffer
Mariya Shalumova
Ezequiel Minaya
Paul Wyszinski
Nancy O'Connor
Robert Vosper
Annmarie Maida
Hector Silva
Michael Weiss
Gertjan Meijer
Andrew Kelly
Ellen Verni
Patricia MacLaney
Hedda Szmuk
Simon Williams
Michael Dimen
Robert Meredith
Erik Johnson
Anthony Lepsis
Jesse Helmuth
Austin Sandler
John Melican
Scott Robinson
Denis Lavallee
Muriel Stallworth
Susan Vig
Bernard Cohen
Kat Cass
George Suess
Brian Caffrey
Jodie Ousley
Filippo Fossati
Garrett Smith
Daniel Weaver
Nickie Friedman
Jeffrey Slade
Katharine Lheureaux
Renata Mayhew
Nicola Whiteley
John Hoffman
Loren Graham
Kelly Shea
Ian Epstein
Paul Buehler
Tina Kukielski
Margaux Knee
John Stillwaggon

Many small farms "closed up shop" and, just as the State did in 1886, let their lands return to nature. There was a new private land evolution back to forests. Wildlife found the early succession stages and the later stages of the State land a good mix of habitat, food and water. Most notable, white-tailed deer and wild turkeys found the new mix of habitat ideal for population increase. Turkeys have expanded their ranges throughout the Northeast. Their size and feeding habits have had rather minor impacts on the lands they inhabit.

The white-tailed deer, on the other hand, were a different story. As their population increased, their appetites for browse rapidly began to impact the developing forests. Their browsing outpaced regrowth in many areas as many of the tree species that are necessary for the healthy evolution of there forests were their favored foods. Since deer can only reach about five feet to eat, they concentrated on the "low-hanging" food, seedlings and undergrowth. This combination of increased population and voracious appetite have virtually stopped the growth of the replacement trees in the forest.

This brings us to today's forest. Our "Forever Wild" lands are, in many ways, devoid of new growth and most wildlife. Though there are species that require "old growth," most species that are more in the public eye are struggling.

Now our private lands that were at one time farms are becoming the property of people who simply want a piece of land for different forms of "enjoyment." Many wish to simply leave their land remain untouched. This is much the same as the "Forever Wild" provision. As it takes a while to realize what has and is happening, maybe it is time to revisit the "Forever Wild" clause of our State Constitution. Though CFA is not in the business of lobbying for legislation, this is only a factual evaluation of the restrictions brought about by the clause.

"Forever Wild" has worked. From a time when the forests were under siege and in terrIble shape to now where they are showing signs of "aging out" successionally, "Forever Wild" has given us our forests back. My question, and the point of this message; Is it time to re-evaluate the "wild" status and pass an amendment to allow management on some of the Preserve land that is reasonable to get to and safe to harvest and manage? By managing a forest you, in essence, slow or reverse succession. This could help to return some of the lands devoid of wildlife back to "productive" lands hat would lead to the improved health and well-being of the forest and wildlife. Steeper and more remote land could be kept as wild and untouched to satisfy the species that require old age forest trees.

This message is a statement of facts and observations that, maybe, should be considered. We live on a dynamic planet and have taken many of the succession controls "out of the hands" of nature and put them in human hands. It might be time for us to use the control we have willed upon ourselves.

I want to wish all members a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year. Let's hope that 2021 is much better.

It's all good in the woods,
Mike Porter, CFA Board President

Roots

By: Ryan Trapani

"Roots." Many of us are aware of their importance to trees. Arborists and Foresters know that a tree's roots can grow three times past the diameter of the tree's "drip line." Roots of course help feed the tree water and nutrients, as well as respire. More impressive to me, is how well they anchor such a large and woody mass to the ground, despite wind, height, and gravity. I have come to trust these roots when hanging out in a tree's canopy. When looking down the trunk of a tall maple or oak – especially if the tree is overhanging a steep slope – it is apparent how much I trust each and every one of those structural roots that peter out into fine roots invisibly beneath the forest floor. It is also apparent how younger trees or seedlings and saplings count upon roots too. In example, a newly planted tree can experience "transplant shock." Transplant shock occurs when trees have not rooted well in their new environment. Does transplant shock occur with humans as well? I know it did to me.

Uprooting to College

College is a killer; At least for several rural activities and hobbies. I'll explain. While I concede that a degree can offer many benefits if it leads to a well-paying job, for many, it does not seem to pan out. The sheer number of indebted students attests to this cost. However, I am exemplifying college's other costs to young adults – transplant shock.

Unlike urban economies, rural activities seem to demand more focus on a "sense of place" since they are dependent upon the landscape to occur. For example, I began gaining interest in hunting when a friend of mine introduced it to me as a 15 or 16-year-old. He was a logger's son and knew the local terrain as well as the local culture which gained us access to property. Two years later, and I was pursuing not only deer, but turkey, fox, and coyote as well as trapping beaver, muskrat and otter. All that ended when college began and I uprooted first to Colorado, then to the Adirondacks and finally to Syracuse, before coming back to the Catskill Mountains. Even though forests abounded near campus, time was limited, but more importantly, I was like a fish out of water, or a young tree's roots not yet adjusted to its new environment.

Roots Take Time

I didn't feel comfortable hunting again until I moved back to the Catskills and grew back some of the roots I had lost. It takes time to get to know a place. I remember back in college – for my Environmental Interpretation class – the professor claimed it took at least 10 years for an interpreter to know a large nature preserve. It's taken me at least 3 to 5 years to familiarize myself to hunting one 50-acre parcel. While patrolling for the NYS DEC as an Assistant Forest Ranger on a 48,000-acre Wilderness Area after 2 seasons, I felt I had a decent grasp of the area but really had just scratched the surface. It's taken me at least 10 years to get to know the Shawangunk Ridge near where I grew up, and at least 20 years to have a clearer understanding of the Catskill Mountain High Peaks. However, the more "I scratch" or uncover, the more I learn just how special or unique each hollow and ridge is unto itself. What seems to stick out to me is that one can

either spend a lifetime getting to know a larger area superficially or rudimentary, or a lot of time in knowing a smaller area quite well. For instance, I have a friend that has spent his whole life unraveling the history of one area in Ulster County – Woodland Valley. He has extensively researched the frequents from famous19th Century Naturalist John Burroughs, to tannery owners like Jay Simpson, and has even mapped out many of the tannery's now lost and remote bark roads crisscrossing the hollow and mountainside. It's quite impressive.

My point here is to illustrate the importance of "roots." When I was growing up, it seemed that a "rolling stone" or world traveler was more revered. Although there are some advantages to this, there are costs too, especially to rural land uses or activities like hunting, fishing, arboriculture, forestry, and more. For instance, it takes time to decipher all the forest's trees, where and how they grow best. It takes time to navigate the habits of the local deer herd, where turkey roost, fish dwell, or ginseng or mushrooms grow. One must be present when the maple sap decides to run; It waits for no man. After the sap's collection, you can bet you'll be well-rooted to that sugarhouse and its boiling pan. More than likely you had to be anchored to some nearby trees that needed to be cut for sapwood the season prior so that it dried and would burn well. Pruning apple trees isn't too much different either. One must be on the land sometime between January and March to make the important pruning cuts; Spring also waits for no man. All this isn't that difficult but requires some simple anchorage to the land. It takes time to know where the best trout pools are, or where to camp in the woods. It's not just knowing the local terrain, but also the culture too. For instance, my logger friend knew what good timber was, but he also knew how to read a tax map and where to access it. To me, this is one important service that the Catskill Forest Association can provide its members, especially those new to the area. CFA can help its members "familiarize" themselves, and perhaps grow those roots a little bit faster. I know others have helped me along, that's for sure.

Introducing: The Tree Planting Program

By: Zane Lawyer

The memory of an impressive tree is one of the strongest bonds we have with our own land. Whether it's an awesome oak spreading the canopy wide open or a kingly white pine standing tall in our own woodlot we end up sore-necked and wide-eyed, gawking at a tree that has thrived under the perfect conditions.

In the forest, the survival of a seed into a healthy mature tree is a matter of fitness, chance, and sheer numbers. One may wonder how, among all its other siblings, an individual's genetic make-up gave it a competitive edge over its rivals of the forest floor. How, out of all the ways it could have scattered, it fell far enough outside the shade of its parent tree but near enough to a spot with the right mixture of light, water, and space to grow.

That's the length a forest goes to generate its best stock. But in the landscape, you can afford to do it easily in one shot. When choosing to add a tree to your property, its long-term health and function are largely dependent on careful planning and good selection.

Soft spot on the lawn? Plant a Willow or Larch. Have a dry, gravelly upland you'd like to fill in? Choose a White Pine, Oak, or Hickory. Hoping to start cultivating the fruit tree you always wanted? There are varieties of Apple, Plum, and even Peach adapted to our region.

The right tree will improve air, soil, and water quality. It will provide shelter, food, and protection for birds and mammals. A single tree may provide a break from the wind and snow, create shade to reduce energy bills, conserve a preexisting habitat, or kickstart reforestation. Matching the right tree to the right site and planting it properly are the two factors that most influence its ability to adapt, establish, and thrive.

To help its members through this thinking process CFA would like to introduce its tree planting program. Our program is designed to personally meet with members early in the season and start the conversation about what they would like to grow and where might the best site for it might be. We will use this opportunity for some minor site preparation to ready the area for planting and installation in the fall.

CFA will plant up to 3 trees per member of any variety available from nurseries in the Catskill area and transport them the day of planting. Using quality container-grown trees for faster establishment and growth we can show you how to protect your investment by providing staking and fencing for hungry deer, a mesh wrapping around the base to keep voles and mice from girdling the stem, and a heaping wheelbarrow of mulch to keep the roots cool and moist and weeds out.

After 1 to 3 years your trees should be established but may need minor pruning. This is an essential step to help guide their branch structure when young and will go a long way to give them a strong healthy form for many years.

Whether it is attractive foliage, fragrant flowers, or standout winter architecture a well planted tree will gain value over time as a heritage on your land. There are few ways to honor the memory of a loved one, or the addition of a new family member, better than planting an impressive, long-lived, native tree.

Contact CFA before March to schedule a date to select and prepare sites. Sites will be chosen and prepped no later than June. Plantings and installations will be scheduled for September.

Remembering the Bark Peelers

By Ryan Trapani

Each summer I get to voluntarily participate in one of the area's most famously historical land uses – bark-peeling. Bark peeling was one of the Catskill Mountain's first commercial activities that blazed the way for future endeavors in agriculture, bluestone quarrying, sawmilling, acid-making, grist-milling, hoop-shaving and more. Before bark peelers, many roads just didn't exist. Into the unbroken 19th Century Catskill forest could be found Civil War Veteran bark peelers on a hot summer's day. The bark easily "slips" during the summer and can be peeled from large hemlock trees from about the end of May until about the middle of August. I guess before air conditioning became more common, the mountains served as cooler refuges in comparison to some of the larger low-land valleys where most people sweltered.

In the 19th Century – before chrome-tanning replaced vegetable tanning and fossil fuels made synthetic fibers for clothing – leather was the "plastic" used for making a variety of things. Leather upholstery to bookbinding and shoes to saddles for transportation or garments for everyday use; Leather was in. However, for the magical process to occur, a few ingredients were needed: (1) An animal's hide (i.e. cow, deer, etc.); (2) Lime; & (3) Tannin. Tannins are where the Catskill Mountains enter the commercial purview in leather-making. In the 19th Century, tannins were most easily rendered from bark of hemlock trees. And since bark is heavy and voluminous, the hides were brought to the mountains instead of the other way around, hence the establishment of tanneries in the mountains. Many of these tanneries blossomed into roadways, town-centers, and future endeavors.

Peeling Bark – The Process

I can say that these guys must have worked hard and in following some of their ways, appreciate their efforts and more importantly our modern-day technology too. Each year I tan a couple of deerskins from deer I hunted the previous fall. I use the bark from both chestnut oak and hemlock; The bulk coming from hemlock since it seems far easier to peel and many nearby hemlocks are dying from elongate hemlock scale and hemlock woolly adelgid. One advantage I have is a Husky chainsaw with 20-inch bar. First, the tree goes down. Next, I cut a kerf along one side of the log just into the sapwood. Then I cut the log into

4-foot sections and begin peeling the bark back using a "bark spud" from either side of the kerf until the bark is almost loose. I might have to move or roll the log to get the last bit free using a peavey or lever-like tool. I do the best I can; I'm not a professional bark peeler after all. Afterwards, the bark is brought up to the house and stored for a week to dry a bit. The last stage is running it through a chipper to increase surface area. At this point, the bark is placed in a vat filled with water for making a "tea-like" substance or "tanning liquor." Hides are tanned for several months. Over time, a deerskin goes from the blood and guts you once knew, to something beautifully tan-looking and quite useful that should last many years. It also tells a story of an animal that lived in the forest, fed your family, and provided material for clothing or accoutrements. My wedge-pouch used for felling trees is made from one of these deer and has outlasted the one I previously bought from the store. I have a jacket and vest and hope to make more things. What I find equally interesting are the "blemishes" or scars unique to each animal. They tell their own story of the environment from where and how the deer lived.

Naked Logs Back in the Forest

In any case, I only felled one hemlock that was approximately 21 inches in diameter, peeled its bark and hauled it back to my house. Back in the day, they would have used oxen for hauling bark from hundreds of felled trees. Instead, I used a large wheelbarrow since the road was too shotty for my truck. I had a chainsaw, but these fellows used axes and crosscuts. Since my house was nearby, I had no reason to bunk up with several other men inside a "bark shanty" in some remote hollow (nor do I). They must have been a wiry bunch of dudes to be reckoned with after a season of peeling bark. After I finished was a scene not seen for over 150 years in these parts; Naked hemlock logs. I imagined I made some ghosts of bark peeling days-past giddy to see their works brought back from the dead. But that was probably just me needing a cup of water. I could now more easily visualize what the mid-19th Century forest looked like after the bark peelers ran through. Once the bark is removed, the logs seem to be more rot resistant as I've

learned from visiting older peeled logs from prior years. It made more sense how a forest back then may have been more susceptible to forest fires. The historical fire towers that many of us have come to love and enjoy trace their roots – or fiery eyes – back to the bark peeling era. Between the blueberry pickers who burned to maintain their berry-patches, and the bark peelers, fire was more common.

The couple of trees I felled won't make much of a dent in the forest canopy. Like I said, these hemlocks were on their way out due to insect damage. They were also competing with better quality maple and oak trees to boot and so they were used for making that 19th Century Catskill tea-bag – tanning liquor. I have to say, sitting there on a naked hemlock log, I was conflicted. My educational background has taught me to shun fossil fuels. Part of me misses or romanticizes the bark peelers and their incredible self-sufficiency. Part of me is grateful that technology diversified or progressed and accidentally saved our forests from being the sole energy/material provider. And part of me is grateful to have the option of using both when appropriate; It's a choice our ancestors did not have. It makes me wonder about where technology will be 150 years from now and all their potential improvements.

Overlooked Optimism

What I did realize on that log, was how much I had overlooked optimism within natural resources and had fallen down the pessimist's rabbit hole. Since the 19th Century, our population has grown tremendously, yet our forests are more plentiful today. This fact is truly remarkable. Wildlife species have made a resurgence in these hills and we feed more people today with far less land used for agriculture with fewer pesticides required annually. Both water and air are easier to drink and breathe than they were in 1960. In the early 20th Century, seeing a deer in parts of Pennsylvania made the papers. Today, deer make the paper for browsing one's garden plants or the forest understory or colliding with passing cars. Great Naturalists like Henry Thoreau, John Burroughs, and Aldo Leopold lamented the demise of some of North America's large mammals; Many have returned. Oh, there remain issues; I hear about them daily. It seems pessimism spreads faster in the news than the Delaware River after a 10-inch rainstorm; Perhaps a survivalist human trait left over from antiquity? My point is about the tremendous asset that has been growing around us since the 19th Century – forests. Forests have grown despite population increases, climate change or increased consumption. It might not be the "best" forest and surely

could use quality improvements, but this fact – I believe – should not be understated or underrated; Rather it should strike us as simply amazing and at least one triumph – just throw me one – of the modern age.

I enjoy peeling bark to make hides into leather. But, in the 19th Century, due to the lack of technological innovation, trees had to be cut down to make tanning liquor. Animals had to be killed for their hides until fossil fuels freed up the possibility for making plastic that would replace leather, cars to replace oxen and all the land they required to graze, and fuel that would replace firewood and raw horsepower, as well as in making synthetic chemicals, and charcoal for processing metals, or running ships and trains. Just think of the number of acres it took to feed real horsepower! It's not that using wood as a fuel is bad – I use it myself – but rather that wood and grass were the only energy players at one time. I can't speak for you, but I know I took these innovations for granted, until now. The more I learn about land-use history, the more I feel optimistic about its future. I realize there might be species being lost somewhere, but as a Forester in one of the most populated areas of northeast North America, I must admit this strikingly optimistic phenomenon. The "8th wonder of the world" is what Author Tom Wessels labels the massive agricultural undertaking of stone walls created in New York State and New England in his book, "Reading the Forested Landscape." Well, the 8th Wonder is buried under a maturing forest and the domesticated animal power has been replaced by wildlife at our doorsteps.

How will others remember us today, as I remember the bark peelers or innovators in between? The asset they have left behind is marked and documented in that hemlock tree I felled via its 100 plus tree rings. The tree grew – in part – due to better technology being used in chrome-tanning. Will fossil fuels be replaced by something else better that will further improve conditions? Are we capable or tolerant enough to allow such innovation? What asset will I (we) leave behind? Like the bark peelers, what technology or management will be used today or tomorrow that will blaze the way for the next best thing or improved forest condition? We have the option to cut the "right" tree or leave the "right" one that others before did not. Our ancestors – whether intentional or not – left a more abundant forest. Now, I guess it's about leaving a "better" forest. In other words, sheer quantity of forest may have returned, but its "quality" is up for debate about its improvement. Surely, that is where the Catskill Forest Association enters the purview of today's forest.

Flowers with expanding leaves

Hobblebush

By: Mike Kudish, Photographs by: David Turan

Top view of a dimorphic flower cluster. Showy white sterile flowers form a ring around the small, inconspicuous yellow fertile flowers.

I've been wanting to write about this shrub, known as hobblebush or witchhobble, for years not only because it is so familiar to many CFA members and because it is attractive and common, but because of its unique combination of biological and ecological attributes. In my forest ecology course at Paul Smith's College, I would devote nearly a full class hour to it. Here, I'd like to praise its attributes and then plunge into the reasons for its distribution in the Catskills; it is not everywhere.

BIOLOGICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

First, it is one of the most abundant shrubs in the northern hardwoods-hemlock and spruce-fir forests. Why? Because it can tolerate considerable shade and considerable acidity that these forests create.

Second, its main branches grow out horizontally from the trunk, parallel to the forest floor, making it a nuisance sometimes to walk through: hence the name, hobblebush or witchhobble. Note that the twigs that diverge from these branches turn up toward the light, each twig bearing a pair of leaves. If the main branches grew vertically, one leaf pair would shade out half the leaf pairs below it. In a darkened forest, this would be self-defeating; the plant needs all the light it can get.

Third, I did not realize this attribute until my later years at Paul Smith's College. I tripped over a horizontal branch in the woods behind my house. When I looked to see why, I noticed that the branch had, under its increasing weight, begun to sag down until the end of it touched the ground. The branch, then to my amazement, had started to send roots into the moist soil. This unusual kind of rooting, where

a stem produces a root instead of another root, is called adventitious rooting; usually roots divide underground producing more roots. This kind of adventitious rooting is called layering. Raspberries and black spruce do it, too. It is a form of vegetative, also known as asexual, reproduction. From a set of adventitious roots, a new plant can grow up – genetically identical to its parent.

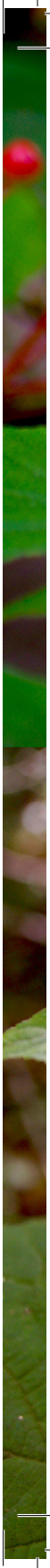
Fourth, the overwintering buds are of two kinds. The slender ones are vegetative; they will produce only twigs and leaves. The wide, bulbous buds are flower buds. All these buds are naked; i.e. they have no specialized bud scales to protect the unexpanded leaves and flowers inside. In other woody plants, bud scales fall off when the bud opens in the spring. But in hobblebush, the two outer structures - brown and fuzzy with prominent veins – do not fall off; they expand to form the first pair of large, round leaves that we see all summer.

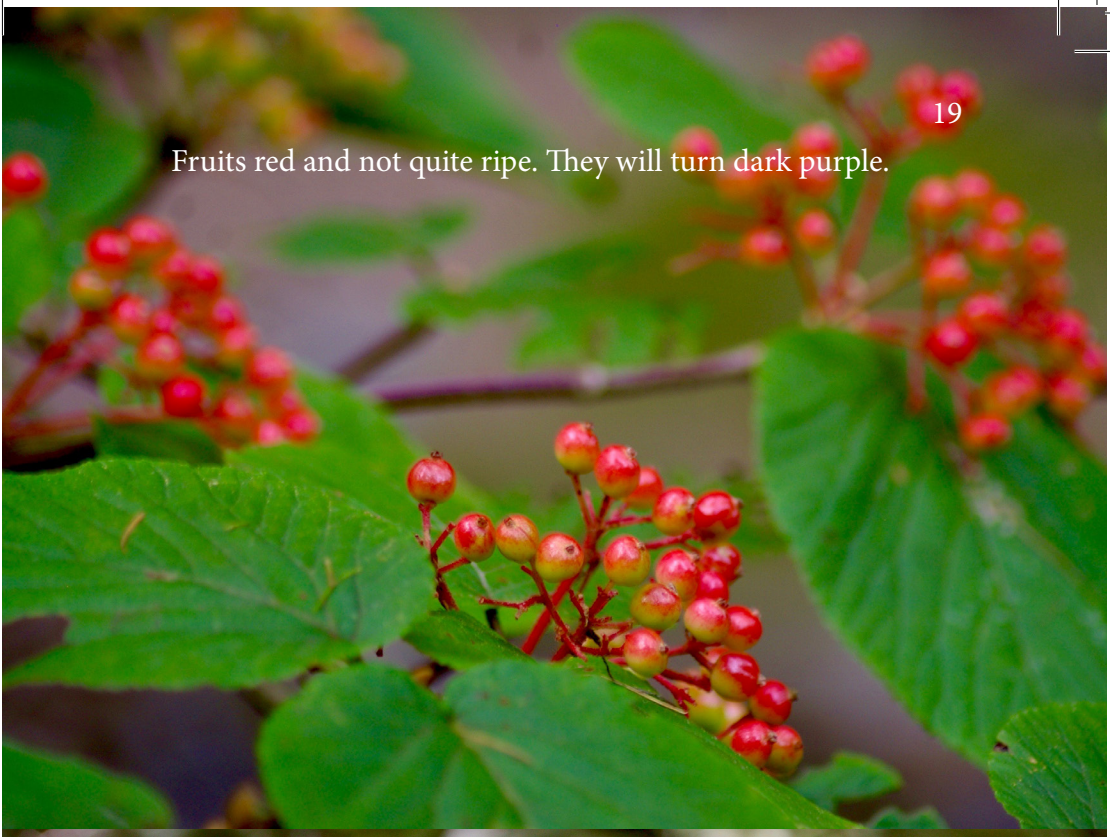
Fifth, when the large, thin, membranous leaves start to wilt and droop, they are the first to tell us that a drought is coming. Other thin, large-leaved forest plants that do this are striped maple, nettle, and white snakeroot.

Sixth, in addition to layering as a form of asexual reproduction, hobble bush is dependent upon animals for its sexual reproduction (in which a generation is different genetically from its parents). The flowers are of two forms, i.e. dimorphic. The outer ring of large white, showy blooms we see in late April or early May before hardwood leaf-out is sterile; this ring produces no pollen or seed. The function is to attract pollinating insects. The inner cluster of small yellow, rather inconspicuous flowers is fertile – they produce pollen and seeds. It's a division of labor among these flowers – I'll do this while you do that.

Seventh, some folks like to cut off a small hobblebush branch about February or March and place it in a jar of water in a warm home. The buds may open, and if there are flower buds, the cutting will bring even more early spring into the house.

Eighth, the fruit, a one-seeded drupe (built something like a small cherry), is consumed by a wide diversity of mammals and birds. The mild-flavored fruits are edible to people, too, that is if we don't mind the large pit inside.





Fruits red and not quite ripe. They will turn dark purple.

Vegetative (naked twig and leaf) buds and expanded leaves.

Ninth, the size of the hobblebush plant may tell us something about the degree of deer browse on a site. It is a deer favorite. Scraggly plants one to two feet high with their tops chewed off tell us that deer are common in the area. Where the plants reach heights of five to eight (seldom ten) feet and form dense thickets, deer are infrequent visitors.

EXPLAINING THE DISTRIBUTION IN THE CATSKILLS

Some years ago CFA member Steve Lanner asked me why he finds hobblebush mostly at higher elevations, roughly above about 2500 feet. I had noticed this, too, but could not tell him why. I recently asked CFA's Ryan Trapani and John MacNaught for their thoughts. Ryan said that he finds the shrub at higher elevations where deer browse seems less and also under dying hemlock groves along with maple and black birch reproduction. John wrote me that the largest grove he hobbled through is near Balsam Lake Mountain at about 3000 feet.

I've been doing lots of thinking about and mapping hobblebush lately for this article. I climbed Balsam Lake, Balsam, and Lone Mountains and Dry Brook Ridge, carefully noting where hobblebush is and is not. I scoured the lower elevation (2200 to 2500 feet) Mill Brook old growth grove, too.

I looked through all the forest sample plot notes I had made as a graduate student for quantitative data – how much hobblebush occurred under how much tree abundance, species-by-species. Sure enough, where a tree species was present in very large volumes, it cast too great shade, and hobblebush was minimal.

Here are my conclusions:

Hobblebush is a photosynthesizing autotroph, i.e. it makes its own food using light, carbon dioxide, water, and some mineral nutrients. It does not depend upon any other plant species for this, so can grow under and with almost all of them provided that the shade and competition from them are not too intense. It can grow under spruce, fir, hemlock, sugar and red maples, beech, black cherry, yellow and paper birch, and white ash.

Because it is dependent upon insects for pollination and

mammals and birds for seed distribution, there is an element of chance where seeds will land and grow. There are many places where it is absent simply because no seed landed; there is nothing "wrong" with the site.

Excluding its absence because of a lack of chance seed arrival, here are my reasons why it does not grow under certain conditions:

First, hobblebush will be rare, dwarfed, or absent if the shade and competition are too intense from hemlock, spruce, fir, nettles, and beech sprouts. Hemlock and nettle competition is more common below 3000 feet and beech competition is more common above 3000 feet. On those summits with balsam fir and/or red spruce, hobblebush will be absent where these conifers occur in dense thickets. A mixed stand of hemlock and/or spruce and/or fir with hardwoods such as yellow birch, red maple, sugar maple, beech, and/or black cherry will not keep hobblebush out.

Second, places where the soil has been greatly disturbed may keep hobblebush out. I think that, on these sites, the necessary mycorrhizal fungi may be gone; mycologists will need to test this to see if it is true. Such places include agricultural (abandoned pasture and crop) lands which generally occur at elevations below 2500 feet. Such places with greatly disturbed soil include also repeatedly burned over lands such as in the Esopus and East Branch Delaware Basins, and along the Escarpment (see the many articles in CFA News over the years on oaks, Native Americans, and forest fires). Repeatedly burned over lands occur most frequently in the valleys and on lower slopes.

Logging generally will not interfere with hobblebush growth and neither will a site burned over only once or twice such as on Hunter and Plateau Mountains.

CLASSIFICATION

I learned as a student that hobblebush bears the scientific name, Viburnum alnifolium Marshall, i.e. the viburnum with the leaves of the alder. Now, many botanists prefer the synonym, Viburnum lantanoides Michaux, i.e. resembling Viburnum lantana, the hobblebush of Europe.

Until recently, this shrub along with all the other viburnums, had been placed in the honeysuckle family, the Caprifoliaceae. Now it has been moved into the moschatel family, the Adoxaceae.

HOBBLING THROUGH IT

CFA's Ryan Trapani and many other folks dislike hobbling through thickets of hobblebush. I'd rather go around these thickets, too, but at least this shrub lacks the prickles of blackberry and the stinging hairs of nettle. When I do have to push through it, I think of how marvelous it is biologically and ecologically, and this lessens greatly the inconvenience.

Leaves in fall color

Programs & Services -

Learn more at catskillforest.org/programs

Program	Description	Time
Consultations	*One-hour property visits by field staff to help you learn about what your property holds*	**All Year**
Apple Tree Pruning	*Pruning helps keep apple trees healthy and improves quality and quantity of yields*	**Jan. - March**
Apple Tree Grafting	*A horticultural technique to help bring old, neglected trees back to fruition*	**April - May**
Forest Bird Program	*High-Nesting Bird Boxes for ducks, owls, etc. and/or Canopy Bird Feeders that protect against squirrels & bears*	**All Year**
Invasive Species Management	*Care for trees against invasive insects, and care for forests against invasive plants*	**May - Sept.**
Portable Sawmill Program	We bring a state-of-the-art portable sawmill directly to your property and mill your logs to lumber, on the spot	**Spring - Fall**
Property Mapping	Custom property maps highlighting the property features you want to see	**All Year**
Trail Camera	Ever wonder what wildlife is around when you're not?	**All Year**
Tree Planting	CFA will find prime placements for up to 3 trees	**Spring - Fall**
Wildlife Habitat Management	Forestry practices to help improve your woodlot for wildlife	**All Year**

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