



CFANews

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CFA NEWS

Autumn 2025

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As a member you can view upcoming events
and learn more about programs at; www.catskillforest.org.

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Catskill Forest Association and receive a gift from us.

CFA Staff



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As Director, Ryan oversees the day-to-day activities at CFA. He is involved in the creation and administration of the Catskill Forest Association's programs and events. Ryan is a Forester and an ISA-Certified Arborist.

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As Program Manager, Zane directs the development & implementation of CFA's programs, services, and events. Additionally, Zane oversees CFA's Forest Saver and is an ISA-Certified Arborist.



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As Education Forester, Giovanna provides consultations, assists with field programs, and develops the forestry education services. Giovanna oversees CFA's Forest Farming program.



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As a Forest Technician, Jen oversees our Legacy Tree Program and helps support our IT & business systems. Additionally, she assists in the implementation of CFA's programs, services, and events.

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As Office Manager, Amy oversees all administrative duties for the Staff and Board of Directors at CFA. She also manages invoicing for programs and services.



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As Administrative Assistant, Cindy handles all of our membership services.

From the President's Desk: Autumn 2025

By: Mike Porter, Board President

Woods Safety and Efficiency

As Autumn rolls around, it's time to consider next year's firewood. I wish to share some thoughts I had during the COVID outbreak that I shared with members through a series of letters. Safety in the woods is paramount to getting your wood out and getting yourself out safely. I have composed this and shared it with our staff for accuracy, so this is really my first cooperative effort at giving information to you as members.

As I outlined my ideas for this article, I came up with a list of items to include. To make it easier to read and absorb, I am going to present this information as a bullet list of ideas.

* Take "Game of Logging" through CFA or any other place you can get the class. This class goes into many of the safety techniques and skills you will need to be safe in the woods. Once you finish the class, practice your techniques and watch others as they use the techniques espoused by the instructor. This is one of the best classes I have taken relative to safety.

Acquire the appropriate PPE. There is that term again. Haven't we heard enough about PPE? NO, especially with regard to working safely in the woods. Proper gear is an investment in your safety and well-being that cannot be ignored. Include a helmet equipped with hearing protection and eye shield or use a helmet and add eye and hearing protection separately. Eyes and ears are easy to hurt in wood cutting, so this is key. Protective chaps specially designed to absorb the speed of a moving chain are also critical in protecting your legs. (Sidebar - It is my understanding that if using an electric chainsaw, the chaps will be ineffective at protecting you. Be especially careful with these saws.) If your woodcutting is done in hot weather, realize that wearing chaps is like wearing snow pants and dehydration can occur quickly. Wear sturdy shoes or boots with good tread so you don't slip with your saw and your feet are adequately protected if part of a tree falls on your foot. While running your saw, gloves may not be necessary, but once you put the saw down and begin moving your cut material, they will help with protecting your hands from splinters and other dangers of

“doing wood.” If you find yourself thinking about something else while running your saw, quit and refocus or wait for another day.

§ Make sure your chainsaw is in good working order. Getting it sharpened is a big deal. In the “Game of Logging” class, you will learn how to properly sharpen your saw. A sharp saw is likened to a sharp knife. One slip of a dull knife can be deadly, so can one slip with a dull saw. Also, a sharp saw makes cutting wood way more efficient. Make sure your saw has an operating chain brake, so you are protected from kick-back when cutting. (Sidebar - If you hire out your sharpening, be aware that the improper use of a mechanical sharpening device can cause the steel in your chain to be hardened to a point that you cannot hand-sharpen the chain if you wish to).

& Have wedges and a hammer or axe to use when “felling a tree” in a specific direction is necessary. Plastic wedges work very well and don’t dull your chain if you hit them while they are in the tree. Paint your axe handle orange or some other bright color so you don’t lose it while in the woods. Trust me on this one.



* Always have a cutting partner or observer when you are cutting trees. Accidents do happen and if you are alone, it could be disastrous. Your partner doesn't need to be "chainsaw literate" but does have to be attentive to your situation. To aid in your own safety, carefully plan when trees will be felled across your driveway so you don't become trapped by a downed tree if you need to get out in a hurry.

Predetermine what trees you need to cut. Pay attention to any danger zones around the tree like wires, roads, buildings, vehicles and other people. I use a simple surveyors tape tied around my target trees but you can use bright paint or flagging to identify the trees you want to cut. If cutting for firewood, plan on taking trees that are of lesser quality than, say, a nice sugar maple or oak. You will be improving your forest by removing these poor-quality trees. Poor trees burn just as good as better quality trees. **HAVE A PLAN FOR YOUR WOODS.**

\$ Wear clothing that will protect you against scrapes, abrasions, ticks, sunburn and other dangers found in the woods. Chaps go a long way in doing that for your legs, but your arms and torso also need protection. Sometimes long sleeves are the best protection, even when it is hot.

& Make sure your environment is safe from rocks, "widow-makers" (loose or 'free' parts of trees that can fall on you during the cutting or falling process) and bent over smaller trees that can spring up dangerously. Rocks can destroy a chain in almost the blink of an eye and their effects can be eliminated by being aware of their position and removing those that are in the way. Tree parts under strain can be dangerous and difficult if not approached carefully. A "Game of Logging" class will help make you aware of these dangers and care.

These items are a great start to being safe in the woods. Realize that you can be totally prepared, but skill level is a limiting factor. You must practice your techniques and skills regularly to be good. Also, your saw will perform more efficiently if used regularly. (Sidebar - When choosing your fuel for your saw, use only the appropriate oil additive added to a high-test, non-ethanol gasoline. This gas will make your saw start easier, run better and faster and not spoil with time spent in the saw or can. Typically, unleaded, ethanol gasoline spoils with time and must be drained or replaced every so often.)

As you can see, simply buying a saw and cutting trees does take much thought and preparation. The safety and well-being of you as a wood cutter is critical. Seeing your woods develop into what you desire, at your own hands, is very satisfying. To aid in your vision, enlist the field staff of CFA through the Consultation program to help formalize your ideas and plans.



A satisfying before (left) and after (right) of a white oak release conducted with chainsaws and a vision!

Thanks for listening and keeping me going with your comments and ideas for events and topics for these letters.

It's all good in the Woods.

Mike Porter, President CFA

Board of Directors

Forgotten Forests

By: Ryan Trapani, Director of Forest Services

Occasionally, I get caught doing something I promised I'd never do again. It's usually in a new place I've never been or when I'm trying to cut corners and get somewhere fast. At some point, this shrub grabs me by the ankle, dragging me down or has me crawling on hands and knees to go under and through it. Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) is a shrub I've come to dislike over time. Like many people, I too used to love the site of it from the road or meandering trail. Its evergreen leaves and beautiful summer flowers really light up the forest understory. But in 2001, this perspective began to change after taking a seasonal "trail crew" position for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Ironically, the job didn't really take place on a trail. Instead, it involved bushwacking off-trail to paint boundary line for State land in and around the Catskill Forest Preserve. For the most part, I really loved this job, since it had me going into forests I would never usually have reason to. However, some portions of woods—like the one on the lower Neversink River—contained seas of seemingly endless mountain laurel and rhododendron. Since the boundary line went through these densely packed laurel stands, in we went. There are places, too, that I have hiked, "for fun", on the Shawangunk Ridge and Escarpment area of the Catskills that are especially dense with laurel. On the map, one cannot tell from mere contour lines what the vegetation will be until "ground-truthed." However, I have learned that it is far easier to use gravity and descend through laurel than going up, but still, it's a pain.

Anyone who bushwhacks in the Shawangunks or Escarpment area of the Catskills realizes quickly how thick the vegetation can be. Sticking to watercourses where sometimes hemlock exist might be one way to avoid thick laurel. Sometimes sticking to rocky areas where vegetation is scant is another technique to make time over ground. But inevitably, I'll get caught for 30 minutes or an hour or more in this laurel. Last spring, I was mugged by a thick stand of laurel. After 15 minutes of trekking through the stuff, I arrived at

a stream to refill water. It was there I realized the laurel had taken my bear spray from its container. I wrote off the expensive pepper spray as lost but figured I'd give it one try to find this needle in the haystack. I set my compass to a reverse azimuth and backtracked to the spot where I had entered the thick laurel. No luck. When I turned around, I went back on my original compass reading. Five minutes into the laurel, I looked down and there was the red bottle of bear spray. Amazing! Finding something like that after losing it almost makes it worth losing.

Laurel's Asking for it

The point here is that laurel was antagonizing me like it probably has others for thousands of years. I believe mountain laurel's role in forest ecology is to piss humans off to a point where they say, "That's it. Enough. We're setting the woods on fire." Thick stands of laurel—and azalea and scrub oak for that matter—are just unsustainable for human travel in the forest. I find it hard to believe that Native Americans, for instance, would have put up with it. Frequent burning of laurel creates more open canopy forests. Where burning persists, lowbush blueberry can dominate and help improve travel and, of course, the edibility for humans and wildlife. Mountain laurel is "asking for it." Its leaves are highly flammable, and its standing height of 2 to 8 feet serves as a perfect ladder fuel to climb into the overstory of pine trees and really make for a big fire. Larger, infrequent fires or more frequent low-intensity fires probably created the above-mentioned open canopy forests desired by humans and much wildlife, since more forbs, grasses, fruit and nut-bearing plants thrive in such conditions. You can imagine that in these more open conditions where plants compete less for sunlight, there are fewer insect and disease impacts on plants. I bet there were fewer issues with ticks as well, but just a guess.

Laurel Indicates Density

Unfortunately, fire suppression efforts in the 20th century have led to extremely dense stands of laurel on the Shawangunk Ridge and Escarpment area of the Catskills. Dense stands of mountain

laurel shade out any future tree regeneration as well. The build-up of fuels from dense mountain laurel, along with other shrubby vegetation like azalea, rhododendron, and scrub oak create conditions for larger and more intense fire. In areas that are less rocky and contain somewhat deeper soil, hardwood trees may take over the site. After 50 or more years, even mountain laurel might get shaded out. Ironically, as much as dense mountain laurel can signal a need to burn, this plant requires fire-return every few decades or less; Otherwise, trees can take over by removing the significantly needed open-forest canopy.

I have written in the past about the density of today's forests. I hypothesize that today's forests are perhaps denser than ever, a result of fire suppression and lack of forest cutting. Dense forests are highly susceptible to diseases since plants mainly compete for sunlight. Sunlight fuels plant health and when it's in short supply, other contributing factors for tree mortality become more significant. Many forest ecologists are beginning to raise awareness about the importance of "open canopy forests." These were forests with large canopy gaps containing forest floors of grasses, forbs, lowbush blueberry, etc. I have only seen glimpses of this forest condition after large accidental burns on the Shawangunk Ridge and Escarpment area of the Catskills. The problem is that, without active management, they don't tend to last long since succession marches on, and they are quickly "overgrown." Perhaps one day, this "forgotten forest" condition can be brought back. Some are making it happen, like in Ohio where LaRae Sprow at Metroparks Toledo is burning government land. Our *From the Forest* radio show with her can be listened to online at <https://fromtheforest.podbean.com/?s=metroparks%20toledo> to hear all about it. In any case, the next time you're tripping over laurel and feeling frustrated, just remember that it's laurel's way of inspiring you to use your thumb and ancient knowledge of fire. www.catskillforest.org

Following the Golden Thread

By: Giovanna D'Angelo, Education Forester

Two weeks in a row now, I have been standing in a member's forest, happily chatting about management, when out of the corner of my eye, a dark-colored, club-shaped fungus has stolen the show. Overly excited (both times), I crouched to the ground and carefully scratched around the base of the club to get visual confirmation of the species my mind had already jumped to identify. A beautiful showcase of golden thread confirmed my guess, and I began to gently excavate around the "thread" or the rhizomorphs in hopes it would lead me to the *Elaphomyces* host I knew was being parasitized in the soil somewhere. As my hands worked to dig in the hemlock needled floor, I explained to the members what I'd found: *Tolypocladium ophioglossoide*.



Much better known as golden thread cordyceps, a club-shaped mushroom with a pimply head that has bright yellow rhizomorphs (the threads) connecting the base of the stipe (stem) to the underground fungal body it parasitizes. Prior to these two events, I had only seen this species one time, and it was thanks to John Michelotti's (of Catskill Fungi) eyes and hands. Now in the span of two weeks, I've found this common but seemingly elusive fungus twice! A bit of controversy surrounds the species this type of fungus parasitizes. Some argue it to be a truffle, though most agree it is a false truffle-like fungus. Apparently, it depends on how you define what a truffle actually is. Either way, since this particular species is not considered edible nor proven to be medicinal, I

choose not to let my delight of its sheer presence get caught up in the specifics.

After doing some digging (online, not in the soil), I found that the golden thread cordyceps (GTC) species underwent some classification changes after molecular phylogenetic research led to an alteration in how cordyceps were classified and how we understood the evolution of these parasites. So our friend, GTC, got the ole' boot from its old genus, *Cordyceps* or *Elaphocordyceps*, and found a comfortable, new home in the genus *Typocladium*.

I believe it's also worth mentioning that in all three instances that I've had the pleasure of seeing these engaging fungi in the Catskills, I've been in a hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) dominant forest. The resources I engaged to learn more about these fungi have all mentioned that the Elaphomyces "truffles" are common symbionts with pines and oaks, though none singled out hemlock specifically (though they are in the pine family, Pinaceae).

The season for these guys is August to October. So, during your autumn woods walks, keep your eyes open for these captivating fungi. Have fun, dig carefully, follow the gold thread!

As always, for any tips, curiosities, or questions, email me: giovanna@catskillforest.org



A very committed member, Nikki Volpicelli, excavating an elaphomyces by following the golden thread.

Time Capsules

By: Ryan Trapani, Director of Forest Services

Humans are a weird animal. Perhaps the only animal that seeks to live far beyond its time is up. Markings etched inside caves serve as testimony to pass something down through the ages. I remember in elementary school we put some stuff in a time capsule of various things for others in the distant future to peruse. Just the idea of our thoughts and ideas being preserved for future generations to see brings some sort of fulfillment, or immortality, if not an extension or lease on life. I wear my grandfather's wedding ring as my own—who I never met—but yet hope my grandson might wear it too, who I may never meet as well. Strange, yet I can't deny the fulfillment it brings. Today's technology emanates heavily with the search to leave legacies. Facebook documents—for better or worse—the daily routines of people's lives, their big events, birthdays, and even death, with accounts that go on afterwards. Social media is a time capsule on steroids.

I love trees. That's no secret. Why do so many people share a love for trees? There is no doubt that trees have served many utilitarian purposes for humans throughout time: from fuelwood to wood for cooking, lumber for housing people and animals, or even boats for transporting our way of life. Some gather medicine from parts of trees or harvest their fruit. With so much sugar available today, we take for granted the decadence that used to be gotten mostly from trees. But today, fewer make a living from these large perennials, and yet we still love them, perhaps for reasons that cannot be seen or touched. If you ask the average American kid why trees are good, they might answer, "They make oxygen." They've never seen a tree "make oxygen" but believe it's true. Perhaps some people love trees because they remind us of being a kid. How many adults spent hours as children climbing trees? As an adult, the thought of "playing" seems even more amazing. The word "play" means to engage in something merely for recreation or amusement, like some sort of alternative reality to regular life. Maybe as close to freedom as can be? I still recreationally climb trees. It's not only a great workout with a great view at the end, but brings back that sense of "play", of freedom for just a little while.

The Woody Time Capsule

Trees are special to me for all the above reasons. But they are also special because they are sort of like time capsules. An example of one famous time capsule was the Balmville tree, near Newburgh, Orange County. The hamlet was named after the tree since back in the day it was believed to be a Balm-of-Gilead tree. Eventually it was identified as a massive eastern cottonwood, measuring 95” at its base. It was thought that the mighty old tree was planted by George Washington during the Revolutionary War when fighting the good fight near Newburgh. But it was later determined that it dated back prior to the American Revolution, to 1699. When the tree was deemed a hazard in the late 1990s or so, neighbors rallied to save it, inciting the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historical Preservation to take control of the tree and the land it grew on for preservation purposes. This ownership would represent the State’s smallest “State Forest” at a whopping 348 square feet. Eventually, the massive cottonwood was finally removed in 2015 due to the hazard it posed to traffic, but not without seeking the continuance of its legacy. People removed cuttings and buds and planted them in pots to preserve this specimen for future generations. According to Wikipedia, only 1 cutting survives.

The point here is that trees remind us of our past and future. Trees are not only literally larger than us but can also outlive us by many generations. Their “bodies” or wood can also store or record the past. Lost maple taps are sometimes swallowed up by growing trees. Gone is the maple sugarmaker, but his marks or tapholes remain. Just last week, a member told me there was an entire children’s bicycle inside the massive ash tree I was about to inject with pesticide to kill emerald ash borer. She remembered it laying in the crotch of that tree, but now you would never know it. That kid may be old and gray, but the tree still has his bike, frozen in time. Tree rings can also record weather patterns from the past, like rainfall or drought. Some even show forest burning from indigenous people from the distant past or from “Mountain Americans” who burned our ridgetops for blueberries more

recently. Groups of trees or “stands” can also indicate how humans have treated or tended to the land. For instance, the presence of oak, aspen, pitch pine, or chestnut may indicate lots of cutting or burning, while maple, beech, and hemlock might indicate the lack thereof. Volunteer apple, pear, or mulberry may indicate farmers were in the area. Black walnut can sometimes indicate prior Native American settlement.

Planting a Legacy

I talk a lot about cutting the “right” tree to improve quality for those left behind. However, I equally enjoy planting trees. I like watching them grow, but I also can’t deny the fulfillment I receive from leaving this woody time capsule for others to enjoy in the future. Some trees like plum or peach are cool to plant, but they don’t last too long. Healthy apple trees of Standard rootstock can last over 100 years and are that much more special. Mulberry is a good choice for a relatively maintenance-free, long-lasting fruit tree. Nut trees are for the long run. Red or white oak aren’t necessarily edible for humans but offer wildlife a beneficial food source for generations. Trees planted without fruit or nuts as a goal include many. Some that come to mind are yellow poplar and sycamore. Both are relatively fast-growing and usually maintain a strong central leader without too much pruning, making it a structurally sound tree. Maybe someday we can begin to plant and bring back the sorely missed American chestnut. In any case, if you are thinking about planting a tree, do so carefully. All too often, trees are planted in the wrong site, under power lines, or too close to structures, roads, or houses, where they will be prematurely removed. When it comes to trees, quality matters more than quantity. www.catskillforest.org

A Funky Catskills Find!

“An abandoned Superior school bus, found while backpacking on public land, made for an interesting pit stop on a September camping trip. Complete with cots and an old wood burning stove inside, it makes me wonder who got the bus up here, but even more curious is how!”

Picture by CFA staff member, Giovanna D'Angelo





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Have a perspective, experience
or picture you want to share with
the Catskill Forest Association
community?

Email us at
giovanna@catskillforest.org or
give us a call to be included in
our next newsletter!

The Legacy Tree Planting Program trees have been picked up
and are ready to go to their new homes! We're gearing up for
another succesful season of fall tree planting.

If you're interested in participating in next year's program,
reach out to Jen@catskillforest.org or give us a call!



Upcoming Events

Saturday, Oct 4 ***2025 Annual Membership Meeting***

This is a members only event in which we gather to reflect on the past year's programs, services, and events, and hear important updates from CFA's staff and Board of Directors over a delicious meal.

Saturday, Oct 18 ***Wild Mushroom Woods Walk***

Join us to learn about mushroom identification, best practices, and learn where to look, what to look for, and especially what to look out for while foraging for mushrooms in the region with Catskill Fungi's John Michelotti.

Saturday, Oct 18 ***Mushroom Log Inoculation Workshop***

Learn about what types of wood are viable sources for the mushroom spawn, how to take care of your log, fruiting mushrooms, harvesting, and pest control. Each participant will go home with a log they've inoculated with mushroom spawn.

Saturday, Dec 06 ***Wreath-Making Workshop***

Welcome in the winter season with us by learning the art of wreath-making. Mike Porter, CFA's Board President, will show you how to build and decorate one for your home.

Saturday, Dec 13 ***Deer Processing Demonstration 2025***

Learning to butcher your own meat is an invaluable life skill, not to mention the dollars you'll save doing it at home instead of sending your deer away to be processed. Join us for a demonstration on how to butcher a deer at home from start to finish.

Programs & Services

Learn more at catskillforest.org/programs

<u>Program</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>
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
Forest Farming Program	Use agroforestry to manage your property affordably & sustainably by learning to cultivate non-timber forest products	Spring - Fall
Invasive Species Management	Care for trees against invasive insects, and care for forests against invasive plants	May - Sept.
Portable Sawmill Program	A state-of-the-art portable sawmill brought directly to your property to mill your logs to lumber, on the spot	Spring - Fall
Tree Care: Cabling	Preserving large-sized individual trees with structural defects	Spring - Fall
Tree Care: Structural Pruning	Improve tree structure by establishing a dominant leader	Spring - Fall
Legacy Tree Program	Prime placement for up to 2 trees on your property and education about proper planting and installation	Spring - Fall
Wildlife Habitat Management	Forestry practices to help improve your woodlot for wildlife	All Year

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Become a member at www.catskillforest.org/membership or send a check/cash with this application to:
Catskill Forest Association, Inc. PO Box 336, Arkville, NY 12406.

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PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

TOTAL ACRES: _____ FORESTED ACRES: _____ POND [] STREAM [] RIVER []

CATEGORIES (PLEASE CIRCLE)

BASIC (\$75)	CONTRIBUTING (\$175)
Events free or discounted; CFA News Subscription; CFA Member Property Sign; Access to CFA Programs	SAME AS BASIC + 10% Discount on Services;
BUSINESS (\$200)	SUSTAINING (\$500)
SAME AS BASIC + 5% Discount on Services; CFA Website Listing; Email Referral Advertisements; Free Booth at Forest Festival	SAME AS BASIC + 15% Discount on Services;

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

GENERAL OPERATING FUND	\$
ENDOWMENT TRUST FUND	\$
SCHOLARSHIP FUND	\$

Total Amount: \$_____