



CFA NEWS

Spring 2026

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CFA NEWS

Spring 2026



Vision Statement: To improve the overall health of the Catskill forests through the expansion of educational offerings and innovative services in forest health, wildlife, timber, arboriculture, and recreation, and by establishing the Catskill Forest Association (CFA) as the primary educational and service-based resource for private forest stewards in the Catskill Region.

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and learn more about programs at www.catskillforest.org.

Refer a friend or neighbor to the
Catskill Forest Association and receive a gift from us.

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



Mission Statement: To connect people to woodlands by providing conservation-based forestry education and services to privately-owned forest ecosystems.



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As Forest Process Efficiency Coordinator Jen holds a hybrid position responsible for our Legacy Tree Program, field support, and optimizing our forest management and business systems to enhance productivity and streamline work processes.

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As Administrative Assistant, Cindy manages our membership services. She also plays a key role in organizing our Annual Membership Meeting and supports event logistics throughout the year.

From the President's Desk: Spring 2026

By: Mike Porter, Board President

Let's Drum Up Some Business

2025 was a year of change here at CFA. We acquired new digs for our office. We entered 2025 losing stalwart staff and a young forester who brought a new energy and look to CFA. We took on 3 new hires who looked to fill big shoes. We had all the growing pains of a great organization going through changes. The changes brought about upgrades in staff dynamics. With our new staff and office facilities, great opportunities are arising.

2026 is bringing forth a staff of relative newbies. The programs of CFA are continuing with some showing a need for rejuvenation. Our membership remains at a stable level with many new members replacing past members who have successfully achieved their goals for their forest lands. I am subtly directing this newsletter article to those of you who still have goals to achieve or those who may need encouragement to try something new or different.

I wish to direct my discussion towards two programs that need rejuvenation. It seems that Apple Tree Grafting appointments have been slacking off over the last couple of years. We all have wild apple trees on our properties. Many of us have had grafting done over the years. Others of us are not sure we need our wild apple trees grafted. Realize that grafting is a way to have popular types of apples grow on our old common wild stock that doesn't produce viable fruit. The best way to look at grafting is that it allows us as landowners to produce good, edible fruit that doesn't take nearly as long as a decade or more to produce. The grafted scion is put on



A grafted tree from the front yard of the old CFA office. Realize that grafting can be successful even with a "total replacement" of the crown. It doesn't have to be this way but can be successful.

strong rootstock that has good footing in the soil, so there is no time needed to develop strong roots after transplanting. The “good” apple stock is also, already, above the deer browse line so there isn’t a loss of growth to deer eating the new shoots.

If you have non-bearing apple trees or have a desire to have your favorite apple readily available, grafting is a very good way to go. The staff at CFA have been successfully grafting for many years. They can arrange to have grafting stock that you wish to grow, so your property becomes more productive in a way that suits you. As you can see from the photos of grafted trees here, it can yield a great deal of fruit in a few years.



The second program I would like to discuss is one I am really excited about. One of the greatest resources each of us has in our forest is the trees. We can use the wood for firewood, sell it for a profit to help cover taxes or have your own lumber made from your trees. I personally subscribe to the first and last uses. On my 17 acres we cut all the firewood we need to heat our house. In the process of selecting the trees to cut, I chose only those ready for harvest as low-grade hardwood firewood, those ready to be cut for saw logs. These provide logs for the mill and the tops provide firewood. This action allows for the remaining trees to grow better and make better saw logs for my avocation as a

The same tree ten years later. Ryan made 15 gallons of apple cider from these apples as well as picking them and eating them through the fall season. This grafting could also have been of a few different types of apples.



hobby Sawyer.

In my experience with sawing logs for my own lumber, I have sawn logs to build a log cabin, made siding and structural lumber for various outbuildings on our property and sawn many species of hardwood to supply my woodworking hobby. As I look around

my house, I have several coffee tables, an entertainment center, a dining room table and lots of picture frames and other smaller items that I have made from my wood. All of these are super special as they are all made from wood I cut myself from my property.

To do all this work I need a sawmill, chainsaw, tractor, truck and trailer and all the tools necessary to make lumber. I have also collected the tools necessary to build my projects. To the purpose of this discussion, I would like to state my viewpoint on those trees growing on your property. There is nothing more exciting than having a tree that has the qualities necessary for interesting lumber. That tree growing on your property hides its qualities under its bark. In order to see what is inside that tree, you do have to cut it down and to do so, you need the tools listed above. As we can easily acquire the woodworking tools needed to build the projects, that leaves us needing the sawmill and other big equipment necessary to saw the logs. Having a local kiln-drying business has also aided my hobby.

I spent the money needed to buy the sawmill because I have interests beyond some furniture. My Scotch Pine forest is made up of aging individuals that should be harvested to make the best use of them. I have a tractor versatile enough to do all my heavy lifting and a chainsaw that can get my trees on the ground. I concede that most landowners will not have any interest in owning a sawmill. CFA does offer a sawmill program where they come to your property with a fully hydraulic sawmill and process your logs to your specifications. In addition, staff could cut your trees and deliver the logs to the sawmill if you are interested but have no means of transport. There is an extra fee for this service,



but if you can't get anyone else to move your logs, CFA can help.

As you read this article, I am sure you are asking yourself a couple of things. One, do I have trees that could be cut for a building project? And two, what could I make from that lumber from my own trees? You should learn about the



trees that make up your woods, learn about the working qualities of the wood you have and then think about what you could make using that wood. You don't have to have a great skill to build a classic piece. Find detailed plans and develop a cut list that will supply all the wood in the dimensions you need. Once all this is

done, you can get CFA to come and cut your lumber. You have to allow time for air drying prior to getting the lumber kiln-dried, but further drying will make a better piece. Depending on where you are, there are several commercial kilns that would dry your wood, so it is stable to work with.



I can't stress enough that the level of satisfaction you can get by building with your own wood. I look at my oak entertainment center and think about the tree that the lumber came from. I use my apple wood coffee table and think about all the food the tree produced before it declined and was cut. I use my cutting board on the cherry counter I built in the kitchen and know that I have a special kitchen of my own making. These same thoughts and feelings can be yours in the future. There is really nothing like the feeling of satisfaction knowing that you built it from your own trees.



These last three photos are of an Oak stump left over from an earlier harvest. We wanted to make a seat from the tree so I cut some chunks out of the 20 yr. old stump and realized that the wood was still solid. It had wonderful character, so I made several pieces from it. Who would have known that that old stump could yield such beautiful wood?

If this article has piqued any interest in either of these programs, call the CFA office and arrange for a consultation if needed or go directly to a grafting or sawmill program right on your own property. You will not be disappointed with your decision.

Smoke Signals

By: Ryan Trapani, Director of Forest Services

Years back I eavesdropped on a conversation at my local watering hole, the last of its kind, unfortunately. Two old-timers—in their 80s or so—were shooting the breeze. One of them asked what the other had been up to. “I shot my rifle a few times,” replied the one. “You don’t even hunt anymore. What are you doin’ that for?” asked the other. The man looked up from his drink and stared into space. “Well, if I don’t shoot it once in a while, my neighbors will tell me I can’t shoot at all.” I never did forget that comment. It was a real gem. It’s one thing I’ve always cherished about this local tavern where conversation and a beverage or two are more important than texting on a cell phone or the millions of dollars poured into meeting some trendsetting atmosphere. It checks all the boxes—a jukebox, a pool table, local wisdom, people that are truly open to differing perspectives, and a bartender who knows how to make drinks without any of the pomp and circumstance.

I’ve learned what that man said to be mostly true. People tend to be against what they are less familiar with. For instance, if their friends or family contain few or no hunters in their circle, then they are more likely to be against hunting. I also believe if people know few loggers or foresters, or have never visited a sawmill, they might be more apt to be against the cutting of trees for lumber.

So, in visiting members’ properties over the years, I’ve revisited that old man’s comment firsthand. A shot or 2 will go off somewhere in the distance, or a chainsaw will scream far away, and panic will surface. I try to reassure that “those are just rural sounds.” I’m not arguing that everything “rural” is always good, but that preserving “rural culture” can be as important as preserving land. We can “preserve” all the land we want through acquisition, zoning ordinance, or easement, but without rural characters and rural culture, who will help to improve it, manage it, or perhaps acquire resources that we all depend upon? Without rural culture, there would be no “conservation” or “wise use” of natural resources, as it was defined back in school. If you’re wondering what “rural” means to me, I would define rural as “the ability to make a living from the land.”

Gaining Familiarity with Fire

Fast-forward to a year or 2 ago, and a man from Florida came north to “put smoke in the air” as he referred to it, in Dutchess County, New York State. This guy was Zach Prusak, and he works for Tall Timbers. Tall Timbers is “recognized as the home of the study of fire ecology and is an advocate to protect the right to use prescribed fire for land management.” Zach was there to help bring back one of the most “rural” land uses known to humans: fire. Prescribed fire should be deciphered from “wildfire.” Wildfire is accidental or isn’t deliberate. Prescribed fire is the practice of applying fire in a safe manner to meet some goal or objective. States like Florida use prescribed fire more than any other in the US. Other States that use fire are also included in the southeast, like Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. “Down there, people are just more familiar with fire,” so I’ve heard.

I believe Zach was making a similar comment to that old man in the bar. When something becomes rare—or non-existent in fire’s case—then we are apt to be against it. Zach was trying to bring back fire to private land in New York State, something that used to be familiar to humans not too long ago. Burning fields or forests can be used to achieve a variety of goals and objectives. A few include better forage and cover for wildlife, reduction in pests like ticks or tree diseases, increased soil fertility by burning organic matter, wildfire reduction by reducing fuels, preservation of early successional habitat, increased competitive advantage for pyrogenic plants, reduction of invasive or interfering plants, increased forbs for keystone ungulates like white-tailed deer, etc. There is currently a lot of energy in New York State surrounding fire and bringing it back. Catskill Forest Association (CFA) now sits on the newly created Prescribed Fire Council. So far, this organization’s Draft Mission Statement is “Building capacity, strengthening partnerships, fostering collaboration and creating a culture for the safe and effective implementation of prescribed fire in New York State.” The “building capacity” portion is most important to me. Building capacity refers to increasing “resources” or people capable of implementing or carrying fire out on the landscape. This is where NYS is most lacking since fire has been removed as a tool to manage vegetation for so long.

Fire on Private Land

The failure or success of any prescribed fire culture in New York State—in my opinion—will rest upon the barriers or lack thereof to implement fire on private land. I argue this because New York State is about 92% privately owned. While prescribed fire on government-owned land—such as that owned by NYS DEC, or NYS OPRHP, etc.—will be welcomed, its significance will be most felt on private land since this includes most of the State. CFA just submitted its first Burn Plan to NYS DEC and hopes to burn this spring. While the acreage of this burn is miniscule, we hope that “putting smoke in the air”—in a safe manner—will help familiarize landowners with this forest practice. I’ve written about it in the past, but it’s worth bringing up again. Think about all the small lawns that get mowed each summer on private land. Or what about all the sidewalks, driveways and private roads that get shoveled and plowed each winter. One of these driveways is miniscule. But taken together as a whole, they add up to a lot of land while fulfilling a service desperately needed. However, if onerous barriers were required to shovel your driveway, cut your grass or timber, we would see fewer of these services provided. The same holds true with fire. Fire must be practiced in a safe manner, but we must also balance and weigh any barriers to its practical use on private land. If you want to be involved in bringing back fire to the Catskills, you can donate at <https://catskillforest.org/donate/> or if you would like to volunteer on a fire or perhaps use your property as a test-site, let us know.

Thank you for all of the generous donations we received to support the creation and implementation of our new Prescribed Fire Program. We were able to raise \$27,800 total! Our enthusiasm and energy to bring this land management tool back to the private lands of New York is paramount. We are happy to report we’ve conducted our first prescribed burn early this spring. We are sincerely grateful to all who made this possible through donations!

This is just the beginning.

Appalachian Jacob's Ladder: A Global Rarity with a Catskills Stronghold

By: Chris Nilan, Barkaboom Native Plants

The Catskill Mountains, known for rugged landscapes and extensive forests, are one of the few remaining places where an endangered wildflower flourishes. *Polemonium vanbruntiae*, commonly known as Appalachian Jacob's-ladder or bog Jacob's-ladder, is a perennial member of the phlox family (Polemoniaceae) with compound leaves and showy blue flowers. As its common names suggest, Appalachian Jacob's-ladder is native to wetlands of the Appalachian Mountains, with a natural distribution ranging from West Virginia to New Brunswick (figure 1). Throughout this range populations

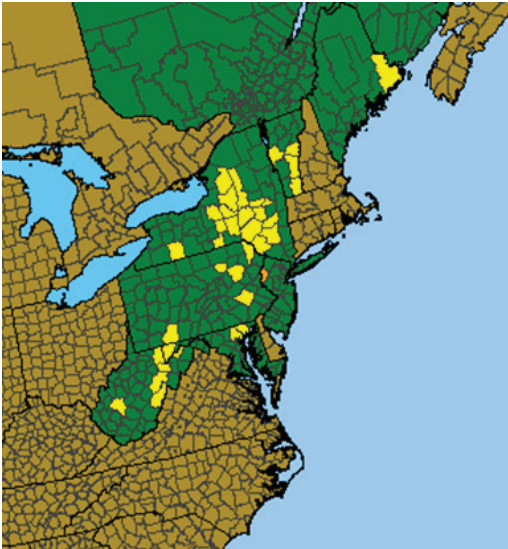


Figure 1. *Polemonium vanbruntiae* county range. Source: BONAP (bonap.net)

are highly disjunct, and it is considered rare in all states where it occurs. In Pennsylvania, Maine, and New Brunswick it receives a conservation status ranking of S1 (Critically Imperiled - 5 or fewer occurrences). In West Virginia, Maryland, Vermont, and Quebec it is ranked as an S2 species (Imperiled - 6 to 20 occurrences). Only in New York does it receive a ranking of S3 (Vulnerable - 20 to 80 occurrences).¹

Polemonium vanbruntiae has distinctive compound leaves and nodding bell-shaped blue flowers on stems roughly 3 feet tall. It can be distinguished from other members of the genus by the presence of long stamens that project well beyond the corolla (figures 2-3).

¹ Nature Serve, https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.143556/Polemonium_vanbruntiae



Figure 2. *Polemonium vanbruntiae* in flower. Photo credit: Chris Nilan.

It inhabits a diverse array of wetland types, including wet meadows, shrub swamps, forested seeps, cattail marshes, sphagnum bogs, and the occasional roadside ditch. While it is quite shade tolerant and will grow under a closed canopy, it seems to flower most abundantly in partially open conditions in soils that are typically moist but rarely flooded. Appalachian Jacob's-ladder flowers in the Catskills from early June to mid-July, depending on site conditions and elevation. Pollination is largely performed by native bees, but in my personal observations, ruby-throated hummingbirds and a number of butterflies will also visit the flowers.

Within New York State, Appalachian Jacob's-ladder is found

within a band from the southern Catskills north to the Tug Hill Plateau.² While rare throughout its range, Appalachian Jacob's-ladder reaches its greatest population density in the southern and western Catskills, encompassing parts of Ulster, Delaware, and Sullivan Counties. Curiously, it is not known to occur in Greene County or anywhere in the Esopus drainage. Sites range from valley bottoms to high-elevation seeps at over 3500' in elevation. In the remote town of Hardenburgh in far western Ulster County, one can commonly find it in wet areas. Likewise, where I live on Hubbell Hill in the town of Margaretville, it occurs in several wetlands in large quantities. Catskills scholar Dr. Mike Kudish (with whom CFA members are likely very familiar) once stated: "If one had only ever botanized the western Catskills, *Polemonium vanbruntiae* wouldn't be considered a particularly rare species."³ So why is it so rare elsewhere?

The reasons behind the scarcity of Appalachian Jacob's-ladder beyond the Catskills are poorly understood. While it is associated with limestone bedrock in parts of its range, this is not the case in the Catskills, where the bedrock is predominantly sandstone and/or shale. Aside from a requirement for moist soil, Appalachian Jacob's-ladder seems adaptable to different habitats. Hydrological changes from humans or beavers flooding existing populations are probably responsible for some losses. Natural succession could also threaten certain populations as open meadows transition to forest, shading out its habitat. Invasive plant species are likely an issue in certain areas.

In my personal observations, deer overpopulation seems to be the greatest threat to this species in the Catskills. Many stands here are heavily browsed, particularly the flowers, which prevents seed production. I've seen multiple populations in which nearly every flowering stem has been lost to deer browse. While this species does reproduce asexually via rhizomes, a lack of new seedlings will reduce the genetic diversity and harm prospects of long-term survival. Unfortunately, this is just one of many native plant species negatively impacted by deer overpopulation in the

² New York Natural Heritage Program, <https://guides.nynhp.org/jacobs-ladder/>

³ Personal communication

northeast.

Fortunately, *Polemonium vanbruntiae* is easy to propagate and performs well in home gardens if properly placed. It prefers consistently moist soils and either dappled light or afternoon shade. It is a lovely plant that will spread via horizontal rhizomes over time to form dense colonies given suitable conditions and protection from deer. One way we protect it in our gardens is by interplanting with native deer-resistant plants with which it naturally occurs, such as woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), Canada bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), scarlet bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) or hairy woodmint (*Blephilia hirsuta*). If readers have an interest in helping preserve a unique piece of Catskills flora, consider reaching out to our conservation nursery, Barkaboom Native Plants, to find out where seedlings can be purchased.



Figure 3. *Polemonium v* in flower. Photo credit: Chris Nilan.

Chris Nilan is owner/grower at Barkaboom Native Plants, a conservation nursery located in Margaretville, NY. Visit barkaboomnativeplants.com.

Seeing the Forest for the Seeds

By: Cameron Wygent, The Forest Exchange

There's a saying about "seeing the forest for the trees". Here at the Forest Exchange, we're trying to "see the forests in the seeds". We think a lot about seeds - our nursery is founded upon them. When we grow trees in our nursery, we start by being in the forests (and urban/suburban spaces, parks, orchards, roadsides, etc.) through the seasons and tracking individual trees.

Some of these trees are individuals that would be considered "old growth." They have faced decades (or even centuries) of adversity - droughts, flooding, diseases and pests - and yet continue to provide food and habitat for innumerable vertebrates and invertebrates.

On the other end of the spectrum, some of the trees we save seed from are special because of their relative youth - they started bearing at an especially young age (a trait called precocity). An oak or chestnut tree that begins to flower and produce seed in its 5th year is an anomaly worth celebrating by gathering scion, grafting, and planting out by the dozens in your hunting plot.

Some of our tree seeds come from right here in the Catskills. There's a black walnut in a park in Oneonta, NY with large nuts that crack as cleanly as any named walnut cultivar we've encountered. There are massive 5-6' diameter red and white oak trees in the Schoharie Valley that still produce reliable mast crops - remnants of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people's centuries of land relationship. There are seedling apple trees in our neighborhood that haven't been pruned in 3 decades and still produce excellent fruit for eating and cider. The list goes on.

Other seeds that we grow travel vast distances to be in our care. We grow shellbark hickory seed from Tennessee. Pecans, walnuts, bur oaks, chestnuts and shagbark hickories from Pennsylvania and The Finger Lakes Region. Honey locusts from Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Hazelnuts from Wisconsin and Quebec. The reason these far-flung seeds end up here in the Catskills is primarily that the mother trees are

exceptional. Disease resistant, highly productive, adaptable to a wide range of climates.

There is a principle in forestry called “assisted migration”, which is the idea that humans can assist plant species (like pecans) in their goal to find suitable habitat as our climate is changing more rapidly than the plants can move on their own. Most may not think that pecans can be grown in the Catskills, but we have the trees to prove it! (Read more about this on our friend’s blog!) The world around us is forever inventing new, exceptional trees, and we can all do our part in preserving them, and getting them where they need to be.

It’s in this way that we begin to not only steward the trees and seeds, but become an active participant in the long term trajectory of the landscapes we inhabit. There is a well-rooted mythology in our culture that forests “take care of themselves”, and that modern humans are somehow “outside of nature”, only participating when we choose during activities like hiking or camping. In truth - the concrete, the microchips in your phone, and the single use plastic are all of the earth, just as much as your body, the trillium, and the river are. We are all participating together.

“Leave no trace” principles are well intentioned, but don’t do enough to acknowledge that we will always have an impact. Every landscape is a dynamic formation of living entities all influencing one another, and we are an integral part of that system. This may seem tangential, but it’s this principle of integration and participation coupled with our large brains and opposable thumbs that leaves humans with the unique opportunity (or duty?) to make informed decisions about the way that we influence our landscapes. Selecting seeds or planting trees from exceptional mother trees is one way we can accomplish this. This isn’t a new idea. Humans have been stewarding forests and planting orchards for as long as we have been able to make tools.

Consider this a humble call to action; to deepen your relationship with the landscape around you and become an active participant in the way that landscape develops. There are likely plants right in your backyard that are waiting for you to notice them.

Springtime Sprouts

By: Erik Heidenfelder CFA Forest Technician

The control of unwanted weedy trees and invasive shrubs can become a seemingly never-ending chore. Season after season the plant is cut back to the ground. Every spring, the nuisance plant returns, sending new growth up from the cut surface, regenerating the plant and negating all your hard work removing it. I understand this plight all too well; every winter I clear patches of invasive bush honeysuckle and advantageous wild grapevine, only for it all to rebound in the coming spring and summer. This has been one of my major land management issues, and I understand many landowners and service providers encounter the same struggle.

How can we leverage this resprouting ability to our benefit?

When applied in the appropriate context with certain species of woody perennial, this mechanism can be used to great benefit. For centuries, coppice management (from the French “couper”- to cut) has been utilized to derive forest products across the world. This method of management relies entirely on the ability of plants to regenerate from the base.

Functional resprouting is an adaptation that allows certain plants to survive after disturbance, such as herbivory or fire. Well known fire-adapted species, such as oak and hazel often exhibit vigorous stump sprouting, but other broadleaf trees and shrubs do so as well; willows, elder, maple, chestnut, ash and poplars are all very capable of sprouting after cutting. Conifers do not generally coppice, with some exceptions being coastal redwood and in certain scenarios, jack pine.

A single-stemmed tree in its first coppice rotation is cut as close to the ground surface as possible, which allows for very straight and tall regrowth. When managing an established coppice “stool”, or a resprouting stump, the stems are cut to new wood, usually around one inch away from where the stump is attached to older wood. Cutting occurs in late winter to early spring, when the tree has stored most of its energy in its root system. Most fungal pathogens and boring insects are not active during the dormant season, allowing the plant to compartmentalize the wound in the springtime

without infection.



Hardwood stump beginning to regenerate from cutting (CFA photo archive)

The dormant buds at the root collar of the coppiced stem need sunlight to “activate” and produce sprouts; a stem cut in the shade of a mature forest is not likely to survive. Large diameter trees have less ability to resprout, the concentration of buds in the stem is insufficient to coppice successfully. For most hardwood species, resprouting is most successful in trees less than 12-18 inches stem diameter. Such intensive management of trees may not always produce success, but utilizing the correct species of the correct size, cut at the correct time of year, is best.

In traditional coppice systems, several blocks of coppiced woodland would be established. Blocks are usually a quarter to a third of an acre in size; an ideal opening to generate the sunlight needed for stools to resprout while not creating oversized openings and soil compaction/erosion during cutting. While recently cut blocks are regenerating, other blocks are entering their useful maturity. This practice has been coined: “resprout silviculture” (Mark Krawczyk). Typically, a coppice rotation could be anywhere between 1 and 60 years, depending on the plant species and the desired product of management. At the low end, one-year-old material can be used for decoration, rustic furniture, or propagation material. 50–60-year-old material can be used for timber framing, fence posts, or charcoal production. Coppiced materials can also be used for mushroom log cultivation, compost mulch, and firewood.

Where no market uses for coppiced wood exists, young wood can be piled around the coppice block to create habitat for small mammals, invertebrates and fungi. Hedgerows and buffers can also be managed with coppice, providing young dense sprouts for wind barriers and snow fences.

The bare floor of a coppiced grove may regenerate with many varieties of woodland perennials, which lay dormant in the seed bank of the topsoil beneath the trees. Small shrubs, such as gray dogwood, silky dogwood, arrowwood, and witch hazel may enter the block in the years after cutting. These shrubs provide browse for wildlife and food for pollinators. The young forest ecosystem temporarily created in a coppice cycle is ideal for ground nesting birds, such as the ruffed grouse.

Resprout mechanics are also used to control pathogens and dieback in single tree systems. The American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation writes about using living remnant American chestnut stump sprouts as rootstock for grafting chestnut blight-tolerant scion wood onto. European hazelnuts and American/European hybrid hazelnut shrubs are coppiced to control the spread of Eastern filbert blight. These blight pathogens oftentimes do not attack the root systems of the plants, only above-ground living wood.

I use coppice as a tool to manage individual trees as well as in making landscape-level changes. The large proportion of green ash on my family's property in Cobleskill, Schoharie County has slowly been succumbing to the invasive emerald ash borer. I have been leveraging the ability for ash to vigorously resprout to keep this species present and alive. Once an ash begins to show the first signs of infestation and decline, I cut the tree to the stump and remove the material for fuelwood. Fresh sprouts have exhibited over 6 feet of growth in one season. This seems to be an effective method to maintain the species as a living component of the ecosystem (when combined with some well-placed deer fencing). Not all the trees I've coppiced have survived. Removing so much material from a living organism always poses a great risk. Several of the ash trees I cut did not resprout at all, I had waited one season

too long to cut them, all their energy and resources had been depleted too severely in its fight against the ash borer.



Progression of the green ash I've been managing through coppice. Left: 6-foot-tall sprouts from a stump I cut last spring. Middle: Sprouts from a stump that was cut 5 years ago. Right: Perfectly sized stems for small-diameter firewood from a stump cut approximately 10 years ago, ready to be cut again.

To counteract the loss of one prominent species on my landscape, I've established numerous seedlings, some to be managed in a coppice rotation in the future. In 2023, I planted several rows of hybrid willow to be used as a short rotation system for basketry material. I also established a block of improved elderberry varieties and hybrid poplar (quaking aspen x balsam poplar) with over 200 vegetative cuttings I harvested for free. I find it's best to practice the skill of resprout management on low-cost and/or free fast-growing species. This spring, I plan on coppicing my hybrid willow for the first time, as well as establishing three more single-species blocks with speckled alder, American sycamore, and with a variety pack of willow cuttings from the amazing Vermont Willow Nursery. I plan on using the Sycamore for craft wood, the alder for a nitrogen-rich tree mulch, and the willow for basketry projects and propagation material. For more information about coppicing and "resprout silviculture" I'd recommend reading *Coppice Agroforestry*, by Mark Krawczyk, and *Woodlander*, by Ben Law.

It's that Springtime, Legacy Tree Feeling Time!

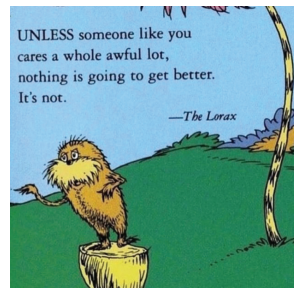
By: Jen Betz, *CFA Forest Process Efficiency Coordinator*



Our CFA truck & trailer is loaded with healthy trees, planting materials, tools, water, happy CFA field staff, and is ready to go planting!

Today I am thinking of springtime and getting excited for the growing and planting season. It's time to think Spring! For me, it's time to prepare for our Legacy Tree Planting Program (LTP) here at CFA. I am taking inventory and ordering materials for our spring portion of our program and reaching out to members who have expressed interest through our connections. Our Legacy Tree Program is a staple of the program offerings here at CFA.

But wait, back up, what is a Legacy Tree? A Legacy tree – sometimes called a heritage tree, is considered important for its size, form, significance or location. It provides meaning and uniqueness. You could almost say irreplaceable! I also think of tree planting as a means of caring for our planet from a larger holistic scale. “The Lorax”, by Dr. Seuss comes to mind.



Seuss. (1971). *The Lorax*. Random House Books for Young Readers

Legacy Trees (let's call them LT's) can provide a veritable number of benefits, producing future crops of nuts or berries, benefiting wildlife through food and shelter, providing shade in large open areas, and the one I like the most, in memorial or commemoration to maintain an enduring family tie to the land.

I really love our LTP program, as it checks multiple boxes for me in my role here at CFA. Planting Legacy Trees is one of the most intrinsically fulfilling things I think we can do as humans; we are planting for future generations, leaving our mark. I have always strongly felt this way. Before I came to CFA, I considered myself a “county farm gardener” and really dug (yes, pun intended) getting my hands in the soil, knees dirty, assessing the root structure, smelling the soil, listening to the birds, and feeling the sun shine down, or rain patter softly around me as I planted trees, shrubs, and other plants on my own land. I have planted memorial trees and shrubs on my family farm, and trees for habitat enhancement for the past 40 years, helping my parents as a young child. Now I get the best of all worlds, doing what I love, loving what I do, as I love being outside, working the soil, spending time with our members, boots on the ground, teaching and helping them connect to their trees and ecosystems. Planting, assessing the soil, thinking about how much water the trees will need, sunlight, wind, wildlife threats, and thinking ahead to what these trees will look like 10, 20, 30, even 50 years plus down the road is very rewarding.

Our program educates and provides our members with a tactile, hands-on opportunity to learn how to plant trees (up to 2 per year) that they select. Our process is broken into two sections, spring site prep and fall planting, maximizing our seasons here in the Catskills, and making it relatively low maintenance, which is important in this day and age of hustle and bustle.

Site prep happens in the spring, setting up time to visit members’ property, helping match the right tree for what they want to accomplish. We at CFA believe in “The right tree for the right site for the right reasons.” Listening and understanding what our members are thinking and what goals they want to accomplish with their trees is something we focus on. For some members, it is replacing older trees that are failing. For some, it’s planning for new shade areas, or to remember a loved one who has passed on and loved walking the land, maybe a newborn child, who will inherit the land, or to create better mast (nuts/seeds) habitat for wildlife.

Historically, here in the Catskills, when you are in the woods, old fields, meadows, farmsteads now being reclaimed by successional growth, maybe driving along quiet country roads on a late afternoon, you can spot Legacy Trees. Heck, even hiking along the ridgetops and

valleys, you can see that those before us planted trees for reasons that had meaning to them. These trees were important! One of my favorite discoveries that has happened many a time is coming across an old homestead and imagining the footprint, seeing two large trees planted about a walkway apart and you can sense the foundations and structures that once existed. Typically, these trees would be planted to mark the joining of a couple in marriage. People settled and built a life in these woods and forests that surround us. The trees still stand, enduring when only rock foundations remain of the structures they built and lived in. This, to me, is an excellent example of our Legacy Tree philosophy, in existence long before our program here at CFA was established. When I am driving to do field work, or even just out and about in my day-to-day life here, I often spend time thinking about those who lived here before us, what hardships they endured, what their plans were, and wondering what they would think now. I think they would like to see their trees standing tall, and still present, leaving a remnant of their existence. I know I would.

I get excited this time of year, planning and working with our members who want to plant trees and learn how and what makes a



Zane Lawyer, our CFA Program Manager, who helped to develop the field portions of the LTP program, assists with Legacy Tree Planting. Proper root ball depth and watering is critical to successful tree establishment and growth.

tree successful. In the spring, we visit and identify sites for planting, marking the locations with black matting, about 3' x 4' in area, anchoring with rocks. First, we remove any plant growth, so the soil underneath solarizes, starving the roots of any plant materials so we are ready for planting in the fall. We meet and discuss the tree species they want. Is there ample sunlight for trees – most, but not all, require a good 8-10 hours of unfiltered sunlight.

What kind of water source will it have? What are the potential challenges? How tall will they get? What kind of pruning? We

have a wide list of species to choose from that we can recommend based on what grows well, environment, and source from local nurseries. It is rewarding working with the different nursery staff and finding the right trees for our members.

If members choose, they can help plant and ask questions. Honestly, this is a hugely satisfying part of my job...teaching and watching eyes light up as our members get their hands dirty and grasp concepts. We don't just plunk trees in the ground and walk away. We make sure that the trees are set up for success. When we plant, we provide fencing, in the form of wire mesh that goes around the base of the trunk. This helps protect from voles, mice, and other critters that like to snack on tender bark that is oh so tasty to them. We also put up taller wire fencing that we will anchor with fence posts around the tree that protect from bigger threats, mainly deer. Of note, bears are not going to be deterred. This is something we discuss if your area is full of the bruins that can be destructive to certain trees, especially fruit and nut trees- these might not be great choices! Peeling back the black matting and assessing the soil, which can be done by digging into it, and talking about soil health is important. Soil can make or break a tree's successful growth. How the soil drains water, what color it is (yes, soil color can matter), are there worms, how many rocks, what kind, (if you are in Delaware County, *we know there are rocks* - there is a saying "2 stones for every dirt", which is very true!) are all things we talk about. Looking at the roots of the trees, we are planting; are they healthy. Root shaving to ensure good establishment and growth is another critical aspect we educate on and practice. Circling roots are a big watch-out. Root ball depth and ensuring we are not planting too deep – this is the number one cause of trees not flourishing. Looking for that primary lateral root- and not burying it too deep in the soil and making sure the roots have room to spread out and have a healthy environment to establish is another key aspect we focus on. Watering, creating that well of soil around and giving the root ball a long soak in water and a healthy drink of 3-4 gallons of water, before we close the tree well and pat the soil down and then cover with hardwood mulch, which helps with water retention. These are all important aspects of planting. Talking about next steps, what pruning needs to happen and what makes a good branch, angles, aspect ratio, I could go on and on. It's such a good feeling at the end of the day when we have spent time with members on their property and helped create

a lasting, living feature. Following up if members have questions and giving them homework to check on their trees is also something we do. Trees really aren't just "one and done", we want to ensure they will grow, reaching the sun, flourishing and healthy.

We are always excited to get new members to our LTP and love our existing members who want to participate in our program. If you want to learn more about planting, what trees may do well on your property, and have some ideas about what you would like to do, reach out! Even if you don't want to participate and have trees planted, we are happy to come out for a Forest Consultation so you can learn more about what you have, and what potential exists! I am always happy to speak LTP language, and my coworkers will attest that I get excited and giddy, like how my coworker Giovanna gets when fungi are mentioned, or how Ryan gets when we talk Prescribed Burns! So, get to thinking about how adding trees to your land could benefit you and your family and, if you see us, give a wave as we travel through. We look forward to hearing from you!



Jen Betz, LTP Program Manager, with one of our enthusiastic members after a successful tulip tree planting near Phoenicia this past fall; look at the smiles and those colors! While it is not required, many members love to participate hands on like this member did and learn planting best practices.

2026 Events

May 9 *Forest Flowers Woods Walk*

May 16/17 *Wilderness First Aid Course*

May 23 *Spring Native Plant Sale*
w/ Barkaboom Native Plants + The Forest Exchange

Jun 6 *Chainsaw Sharpening & Maintenance*

Jun 13 *Foraging for Beginners Walk*

Jun 20 *Blueberry Cultivation 101*

Jun 25 *Excelsior Wood Products Tour*

Jul 18 *Pulling Trees for Homeowners*

Jul 25 *Tree Identification Walk*

Visit catskillforest.org/events for more information.

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 - April
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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PROPERTY ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

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

CATEGORIES (PLEASE CIRCLE)

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS

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;

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

Total Amount: \$ _____