The Enjoyable Art

Forest landowner surveys have shown that this group has engaged in a variety of forest practices, but the one that is likely to be listed most often is tree planting. Several reasons may account for this fact. First, governmental agencies, recognizing the importance of reforestation, have made a variety of tree seedlings available to landowners at a relatively low cost or in some instances, free of charge. Secondly, tree planting can be done without special equipment that would require a large cash outlay. Although special tools have been designed expressly for tree planting, a landowner can get by with a spade and a plastic pail if necessary.

A third reason stems from the personal satisfaction that may be derived from "creating a forest". When the planting is done and the rows of bright evergreen sprigs project above the dead brown weeds of the abandoned field, an aching back and sore muscles seem a small price to pay for such a rewarding sight.

Another reason why tree planting has been popular is the desire to create or improve wildlife habitat. Many people take great pleasure in finding a chipping sparrow's nest in a spruce tree that they planted some years earlier, or noticing rabbit tracks among the trees on an area that had not held any rabbits before.

Many people plant trees for purely economic reasons. Some plan to sell their trees as Christmas trees while others have long range goals such as pulpwood sales or sawtimber sales in mind. The list of reasons could go on and on, but whatever the reasons, tree planting is a very popular forest practice.

To get the most out of his tree planting efforts, a landowner needs to first determine his ultimate goals. Plantings created strictly for wildlife will be most effective if they are laid out differently from plantings which are aimed at Christmas tree production. In addition to the design of the planting, spacing is an important consideration.

Spacing determines the number of trees that will be needed to plant an acre. If a landowner decides to "plant on 6 ft. centers", the distance between rows (in both directions) will be 6 feet. The trees will be in the center of an area 6 ft. x 6 ft. and will occupy 36 square feet (see figure 1). There are 43,560 square feet in one acre. Divide this by 36 to determine the number of trees needed to plant one acre, in this case 1,210. The number of seedlings required per acre for different spacings is shown below:

Spacing	Number of Seedlings Per Acre
4 ft. x 4 ft.	2,722
5 ft. x 5 ft.	1,742
6 ft. x 6 ft.	1,210
8 ft. x 8 ft.	680

It is important to realize that reducing the spacing from 8 ft. x 8 ft. to 4 ft. x 4 ft. increases the number of seedlings required 4 times. In haste some landowners may conclude that since 4 is one half of 8, only twice as many seedlings will be needed; but 4 squared is 16 and 8 squared is 64 and that is 4 times larger than 16.

If erosion is a problem or a potential problem, close spacing is desirable to cover the soil as quickly as possible. If the trees are to be harvested for Christmas trees in 7 to 10 years, close spacing will provide the investor with a greater number of crop trees per acre and hence a greater income per acre than will wide spacing.

If the trees are to be planted in rows for wildlife, wide spacing is desirable for two reasons. First, the lower limbs of the tree will have ample room to grow and provide good cover close to the ground Secondly, wide spacing will allow for the planting of wildlife foods between the trees. Wildlife values are always enhanced when food and cover plants are interspersed.

To insure survival of the seedlings after planting, it is important to handle the seedlings correctly in the field. The illustrations in figure 2 show the correct and incorrect ways of handling and planting seedlings. They appear in a text entitled "Essentials of Forestry Practice" by Charles H. Stoddard.

Heeling in (see illustration) is done when the landowner is not able to plant the trees as soon as they arrive. Heeled-in trees may be held several weeks before they need to be planted. The important point to remember in heeling in and planting is to prevent the roots from drying out. This is likely to happen if air pockets exist around the roots of a planted or heeled-in tree.

Although it is not the best procedure, trees may simply be held in water for several days without any apparent harm. If the trees are held at the edge of a pond or in a small stream, anchor them in some way to prevent them from floating away or being washed away in a spring freshet.

For additional information request a booklet entitled "Forest Trees to Plant in Pennsylvania". It is available through the County Extension Office or from the District Foresters in the Bureau of Forestry of the Department of Environmental Resources.

Automobile Service Tips

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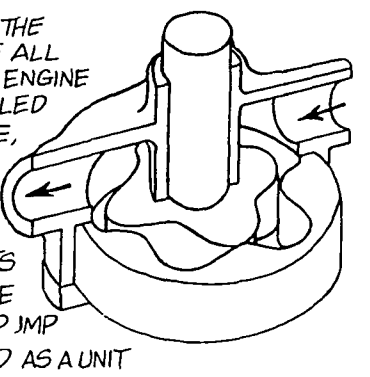

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