

Woodland Management Can Renew Forests, Improve Income

NEWARK, DE — There are all sorts of sayings and songs about trees. But too often people pass by or under trees without much thought of the contribution they make to everyday life and the environment, says University of Delaware Extension renewable resource agent Dean Belt. "Trees use carbon dioxide, give off oxygen and moisture, and help reduce temperature, so they're a major buffer against the greenhouse effect. But forests are gradually being destroyed worldwide."

According to Belt, you can help renew this valuable natural resource if you own a forest, large or

small, by starting a woodland management program. "You'll be helping forests and wildlife and you can benefit financially as well."

Most states, including Delaware, have a professional forester in every county, plus a cost-share program for those who qualify, to help landowners improve the condition of their woods. Belt says professionals can also assist with plans to take hard-to-farm land out of production and use it for woodland development.

Foresters can point out "weed trees" to cut down and offer advice about new plantings. "In

spite of what many people think," says Belt, "timber harvest is not a bad thing as long as it's done properly. Select cutting allows more desirable trees to take over and makes room for planting healthy new trees and building access roads for forest inspection and fire protection."

Through select cutting and planting you can create ideal conditions for wildlife, which can in turn improve your hunting and fishing income, says the renewable resource agent.

"Wildlife seek out what they want in the way of feed and cover," Belt says, "but forests don't

always provide what they need. In an older woods, there might be an abundance of nuts for squirrels and deer, but some wildlife prefer the tender, low shoots on younger trees. Also, an older woods doesn't provide as much cover as a younger woods."

Belt says a woodland at different stages of development, with a combination of older trees, middle-aged trees and new trees, offers a better balance of feed and cover for all different kinds of

wildlife than a woods made up of trees of similar ages.

"Trees are important to our well-being," says Belt. "Forests provide a home for wildlife, a place for recreation and the raw material for many familiar products such as paper, furniture, inks and plastics." He advises Delaware landowners to start a management program for their woodlands and wherever possible return land to forest. To get your program started, call your state forester or county agent.



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