Volume 6 Issue 2 Winter 2024

Illinois Forests

Illinois Forestry Association

"Healthy Forests, Today and Tomorrow"

Inside this Issue...

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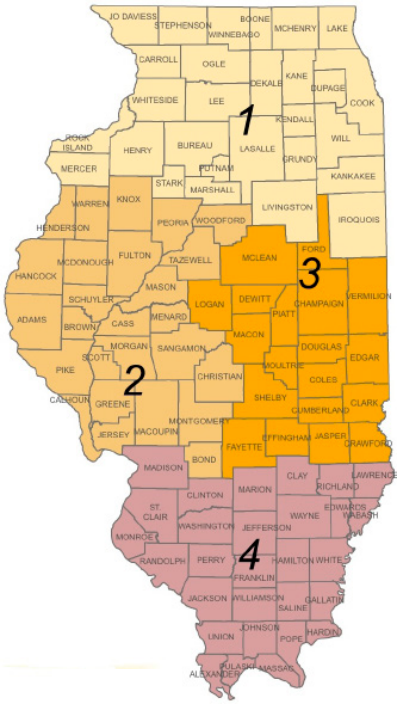

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Our Mission...

"To inspire and empower landowners to create healthy, beautiful, and productive forests."

Our Vision...

"To become the most trusted advocate and comprehensive resource for Illinois forest owners."

Message From the IFA President

by Paul Deizman

Letter to IFA membership -

There is something about philanthropists that makes most people just smile. People – collectively or as individuals - giving and sharing with compassion and intent to help someone else or a truly worthy cause warms many hearts. Perhaps if philanthropy was what the 10 pm news ran with everyday versus murder and mayhem, the world we imagine out there might seem quite warmer than the past. I do not consider myself a philosopher or a philanthropist but if there are actual, good paying philosopher jobs open, I am interested! It is my estimation that through history, many philosophers or other great thinkers have pondered and tried to explain the connection between people, trees, and forests. Forests give us life; the living things use and protect the forest … or must at some point, etc. Forest scientists of course have now proven such connections.

I remain honored to serve as the current Illinois Forestry Association (IFA) president and I hope to serve the organization for many years to come. That said, "president" is just a big fat title for giving time and energy to an organization. Quite frankly, I was most honored professionally to have been selected amongst good candidates to become an IDNR District Forester circa 1991. This great organization, the IFA; though inspired by forestry and foresters, was made possible by forest landowners and individuals directly tied to forestry and the forest in some way. I believe IFA members deeply understand what philosophers had written or said centuries ago. They understand and are affected by the human connection to forests and the vital necessity to conserve and keep our forests healthy.

Foresters for the most part, are paid, yet they are like philanthropists in so many ways. Across the country and here in Illinois year in and out, dirt-boot foresters periodically sit with millionaires, celebrities, dignitaries, politicians in their homes or on their properties to discuss the forests owned or controlled by them. I have ridden in Rolls Royce's, dined in restaurants I cannot afford as I have had the ear of people possessing 100 times my wealth and 1000 times my influence just to discuss forestry. What forestry becomes to the long-term practitioner, it turns out, is simply philanthropy from a tin cup.

Foresters practicing forestry most often drink from a tin cup not a crystal goblet, it's true. Most foresters have philanthropy in their blood, yet I contend, more importantly, the members of the IFA are truly philanthropists. Members of the IFA quite often make cash donations to the organization far above their annual membership support. Thank you all! Long time members Mr. and Mrs. Gerrish and members Mr. and Mrs. Lovett both donated 80 acres of forestland in 2023 to the IFA to own and steward. The leadership remains honored and thankful for their extraordinary generosity.

As we ponder these individual generous acts of giving for the sake of forests and forestry, the IFA executive leadership, the board of directors and I clearly see that the collective membership to IFA – each member – is an act of philanthropy. Members are what this organization and our forests need most. Thank you to all members who by their gifts have built the IFA. Of the many philanthropists out there in our ranks, please consider additionally volunteering on the IFA board, running for an office, jumping on an important committee, or, simply urging or inviting your neighbors to join. Enjoy the winter out there.

ILLINOIS Forestry Association

Feedback Request for IFA Members

Dear IFA Members,

We hope you're doing well. As part of our commitment to transparency and member engagement, the Executive Council has an important topic to discuss: a potential shift in our nonprofit model.

During the recent strategic planning process, suggestions were made to update our bylaws. To address this, our legal counsel has recommended transitioning to a board-led nonprofit model, a structure commonly followed by similar nonprofits. ***Under this model, voting members would no longer be able to vote on bylaw changes or director elections. Instead, the board would be able to amend bylaws and appoint directors.***

The rationale behind this proposal is that most members join nonprofits to support the organization's mission. Our legal counsel says very few members actively vote on director candidates or bylaw amendments. ***A board-led model could streamline operations and allow us to focus more on mission-related activities.***

Before formally proposing any changes, seeking your input on this matter is crucial. Your perspective matters, and we want to ensure that any potential adjustments align with the preferences of our valued members.

Here are the key points:

1. ***Proposed Change:*** Transition from a membership-led model to a board-led nonprofit model.

2. ***Rationale:*** Streamline operations, focus on mission-related activities, and align with the standard practice among similar nonprofits.

3. ***Your Input:*** We want to hear from you! Do you support the shift to a board-led model, or do you value your current right to vote on important matters like bylaw amendments and director elections?

Please respond to the pole sent to all members through email to voice your support for the board-led model, or to support maintaining the current membership-led model. Feel free to also share your thoughts and insights by emailing Zach directly at zachd@illinois.edu. Your input will be instrumental in shaping the direction of IFA. We understand the importance of this decision and want to ensure that it reflects the collective voice of our membership.

We appreciate your time and engagement in this process.

Thank you for being an essential part of IFA.

Sincerely,
IFA Executive Council

IFA Land Management Committee Updates

William Gerrish Woodland

Illinois Forestry Association has recently hired local contractors to survey the William Gerrish Woodland property. This was a necessary step so that we can confirm boundary lines and improve access to the forest. Eventually, plans will be made to clear a small area for parking so that we can hold field events at the property. Additionally, the property boundaries will be marked with purple paint.

The IFA always advocates for following a Forest Management Plan (FMP). Since a plan has already been written and approved for this property in 2021, we are starting by reviewing this plan and revising it as needed to align with IFA forestry goals. We are also now researching various programs that can help cover the cost of implementing the management practices that have been laid out in the FMP One of the management practices on the FMP schedule is to conduct a selective harvest on all four stands of the property. To do this, IFA will hire a consulting forester to mark trees for the selective harvest and then seek competitive bids from timber buyers Remember, if you do not already have a timber harvest included in your FMP, you must first obtain approval from the District Forester who serves your area.

Selective Harvesting

With a selective harvest, we will strategically remove trees from the canopy. Our top priority is to make sure that the forest is harvested with the future in mind. That means ensuring that successful regeneration of desirable species occurs. In addition to a selective harvest, techniques such as thinning and invasive species management will help influence the forest to be healthy, beneficial to wildlife, and productive. In simple terms, we will prioritize opening up the canopy to encourage regeneration of desirable species while discouraging less desirable competition.

Lovett Forest

In mid-April, the IFA will be sending out a team to conduct a forest inventory of Lovett Forest. This will be the first step in developing a forest management plan for the property. This is generally a service that is conducted by a consulting forester. However, since we have professional foresters within our membership and on our board, we have all the resources we need to develop a forest management plan in-house.

Through visits to Lovett Forest, we have an idea of the forest composition, but we won't truly get the "full picture" until we conduct the inventory. To do this, we will establish fixed radius plots throughout the mature forest as well as the 27-acre CRP planting. Essentially, fixed-radius plots are just circular plots that help capture a sample of trees. These plots are systematically placed throughout different stands within a forest. Within these plots, tree species will be identified, tree height and DBH (diameter at breast height) will be measured, and tree form/ health will be analyzed. Additionally, data will be captured regarding the forest floor including tree seedlings present and the potential presence of non-native invasive species. This will capture forest characteristics that will generate stand-level summary data. In the tree planting, similar data collection will take place with an emphasis on the canopy structure of trees (which trees are dominant, codominant, intermediate, or suppressed.

Final Thoughts

This spring marks an exciting time for the IFA. Managing these forests is now our responsibility. We are committed to managing them ethically and responsibly to ensure that these forests are forever healthy and productive for a variety of beneficial outputs. In addition, we plan to share our experience with you and offer an example that can be followed by other landowners throughout the state. We will report on our efforts through articles in our newsletter as well as in-person field tours once the work commences.

The strength of our organization is its members and their passion for forests. We hope you will follow along or even join us in ensuring that these forests are well stewarded.

ILLINOIS Forestry Association

IFA 19th Annual Forestry Conference

Save the Date
October 25th - 27th, 2024
Touch of Nature Environmental Center

Identification of Factors Leading to Oak Decline and Death

by Fredric Miller, PhD., Illinois Forest Health Specialist, Morton Arboretum
& Stephanie Adams, PhD., Plant Pathologist, Morton Arboretum

Multiple factors affect forest health, particularly exotic invasive plants, insects, and pathogens. Oak decline is a major forest health issue in Illinois and throughout the Midwest. In early 2023, the Illinois Forest Health program received USFS funding to begin a study to better understand the factor(s) responsible for the decline and rapid death of oaks occurring in both urban and rural forests.

Objectives of This Study

1) Obtain a broad picture of possible factors and their interactions contributing to oak decline.

2) Conduct a statewide survey of rural and urban forests to better understand root-rot fungi and their role in oak decline.

3) Create updated forest BMPs for rural landowners, natural resource managers, and urban foresters to assist in the management of existing oaks forests and future oak regeneration.

4) Conduct educational programs and workshops to assist residents of the natural resources and urban forest communities.

The project will prioritize new and existing small tract private landowners, NGOs, parks and camps, and underserved municipalities and communities that desire and/or would benefit from assistance in developing forest management plans that lack adequate and effective forest management resources.

To date, 182 oak trees at 16 different sites were sampled statewide (see Figure 1 for sample sites). At each site, tree DBH, tree species, slope, aspect, rooting depth, and any biotic and/or abiotic factors were noted and recorded. A composite soil sample was also taken to determine soil texture, soil pH and nutrient levels. To date, preliminary results have revealed that 85% of the roots samples taken from declining white oak, northern red oak, bur, black, swamp white, and shingle oaks tested positive (i.e. showed evidence) for the presence of water molds (Oomycetes). ***Please note: this is a qualitative measure and doesn't indicate that the entire root system is infected, but only the roots that were sampled.***

Figure 1: Sample sites

Continued on the next page -

Additionally, 56% of the trees that had roots testing positive were growing on flat sites (<5% slope). Overall 62% of the 182 trees sampled had rooting depths <10 inches and of those, 84% tested positive for evidence of Oomycetes. Within oak species growing on flat sites (<5% slope), 93% of white oak roots and 84% of northern red oak roots sampled tested positive for presence of Oomycetes. Sixty-three percent of white oak roots, and 84% of northern red oak roots sampled from "hilly sites tested positive for Oomycetes, respectively. Regarding soil texture, many of the flat sites had silty-clay-loam (SCL) soils at 7 to 15"with 30-40% clay content, a restrictive soil layer at a depth of 1 to 3 feet, and a seasonal high water table within 3 feet of the surface. In contrast, "hilly" sites had silty-loam (SL) and silty-clay-loam (SCL) soils, but at a depth of 15 to 20 inches with 30-40% clay content, a restrictive soil layer and seasonal high water table greater than 6 feet. The sites with soil layers with higher clay content closer to the surface could potentially be slower to drain particularly during excessively wet springs and summers, and periodic flooding. Related to soil fertility and nutrition, oaks growing on poorer sites with <3% organic matter (OM), low fertility (CEC<10), and very low to low levels of soil P and Ca tended to have a higher percentage of roots testing positive for the presence of Oomycetes.

Overview of Root Field Sampling and Pathogen Identification

Field Sampling

- Root samples were taken from 16 sites, statewide.
- Roots excavated from all four sides of the trunk.

Lab Testing

- ELISA (a type of diagnostic assay) was used to screen for Oomycetes.

Molecular Identification

- Pathogens were baited out of the roots, growing them in pure cultures, extracting their DNA.
- Their DNA was Sanger sequenced

Not suprisingly, preliminary lab results have revealed that there appears to be a complex of Oomycetes associated with oak roots including *Phytophthora*, *Phytopythium*, and *Pythium spp.* So far, Oomycetes associated with ***white oak roots*** include *Phytophthora chlamydospore*, *Phytopythium citrinum*, and *Phytopythium vexans*; ***bur oak roots***, *Pythium aff. diclinum*; ***black oak roots***, *Phytopythium vexans*, and ***shingle oak roots***, *Pythium aff. diclinum.*

Further oak root sampling is planned for the 2024 field season to better identify which Oomycetes spp. associated with root samples are pathogenic or saprophytic.

You can read more forest health updates in Fredric Miller's report, 2023 Forest Health Highlights of Illinois. This is available on the Illinois Forestry Association website at the following link:

https://ilforestry.org/resources/Documents/IL-FHH-2023-508-Compliant-Revised-2-2-24.pdf

Pruning Trees - Pay Attention to the Branch Collar!

By Chris Evans, University of Illinois Extension Forestry

Pruning can allow landowners to correct potential growth problems such as bad branch unions or crossing branches. Pruning can also increase the timber value of a tree by creating more clear wood, free of defects. Whenever you are pruning a tree, it is important that you do it correctly and allow the tree to seal over the wound site, completely compartmentalize the damage, and start putting on clear wood.

One critical aspect of pruning is knowing where to cut to remove lateral branches. Cutting too close to the tree (i.e. a flush cut) creates large wound sites and reduces the formation of the callous tissue needed to seal over the wound. Cutting too far away from the main trunk (i.e. a stub cut) creates a long section of dead wood and delays the formation of clear wood.

Ideally, pruning cuts should be made just outside of the branch bark ridge and the branch collar. Cutting here reduces the size of the stub left from the lateral branch while maintaining the trunk wood intact and able to seal over the wound.

The branch bark ridge is the raised ridge above a lateral branch, formed where the trunk bark meets the branch bark. The branch collar is the swollen, often wrinkled section of bark below a lateral branch. To identify where to make a pruning cut, draw an imaginary line just outside of these two locations.

Proper pruning cuts should form uniform callous tissue that completely encircles the cut (looking like a donut) that grows together to close the site.

Figure 1: This flush cut created too large of a wound and prevented the formation of callous tissue.

Figure 2: This stub cut leaves too much wood on the lateral branch, delaying the formation of clear wood and creating a large knot in the wood.

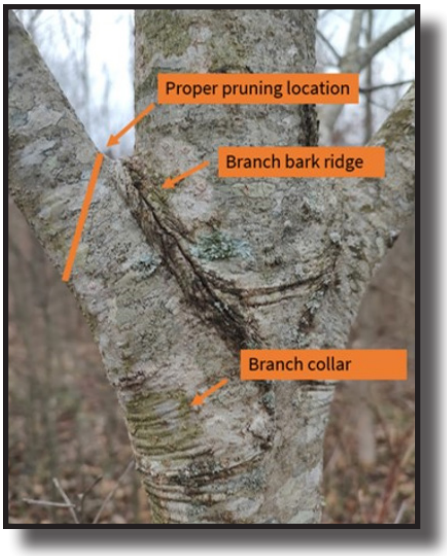

Figure 3: Proper pruning cuts should be made just outside of the branch bark ridge and branch collar.

Figure 4: Proper pruning cuts should create callous tissue that completely encircles the wound site.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Forestry for the Birds: Managing for cerulean warblers on the Shawnee National Forest

Mark Vukovich, Shawnee National Forest Wildlife Biologist
& Justin Dodson Shawnee National Forest Silviculturist

The cerulean warbler is a Nearctic-Neotropical migrant songbird that breeds in mature deciduous forests in the Midwest and eastern United States and migrates as far south as the northern Andes mountains in the winter. Cerulean warblers, and many other warbler species populations, have declined substantively starting in the 1900's. This species is listed as a bird of conservation concern for the Midwest region by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and numerous bird organizations, is listed as "threatened" in Illinois, and a Regional Forester's Species of Concern on the Shawnee National Forest. The primary reason for their declines is the loss of large contiguous forested habitats on their summer and wintering grounds. Partners in Flight, an international bird conservation organization, estimates that cerulean warbler populations may decrease an additional 50 % within 25 years if no conservation measures occur to address habitat loss and degradation in its forested breeding and non-breeding habitat.

Photo 1: Cerulean warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*)

Historic work has occurred on cerulean warblers in southern Illinois, however there are no updated or current databases with records that focus on this species and no extensive work has focused on the species in Illinois. In neighboring Indiana, Dr. Kamal Islam has mentored several students and worked on cerulean warblers on managed forests and published several papers detailing their habitats, management, and life histories. Knowledge of populations of cerulean warblers and their habitats in Illinois is critical for developing management to restore and maintain their preferred habitat and to understand their responses to forest management activities.

To better understand current cerulean warbler populations and their summer homes on the Shawnee National Forest, we conducted a cooperative survey effort with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission in likely habitats in May–July of 2021–2023. We documented 106 singing males on the forest from four counties. The greatest concentration, a total of 75 males, was found in the Cave Valley Bird Area of Shawnee National Forest. Understanding cerulean warbler habitat within the Cave Valley Bird Area is important to maintaining populations there but also using that information to develop forest management activities that could create, restore or enhance habitat for this species across the forest and its greater range. To collect these data we plan to utilize light detection and ranging (LiDAR), a remote-sensing technique. LiDAR analyses can measure tree canopy height, heterogeneity, and topography. Forestry professionals will also conduct timber stand examinations to measure basal area, tree species composition, and understory and midstory plant composition. Combining LiDAR with stand exam data collected from the ground will enable us to better understand existing cerulean warbler habitats and help develop forest management actions to restore and enhance habitat for cerulean warblers elsewhere. In sum, we now have the tools to hopefully decipher the summer home plans of the cerulean warbler in southern Illinois and on the Shawnee National Forest.

Photo 2: Cerulean warbler (*Setophaga cerulea*)

We mostly observed cerulean warblers within the Cave Valley Area to be associated with large diameter, mature tall trees on slopes adjacent to the Cave Creek floodplain or along the Cave Creek or Cedar Creek. These characteristics align with habitat conditions described from other research efforts on cerulean warblers. Interestingly, some areas adjacent to and within the Cave Valley Bird TArea consist of non-native shortleaf pines and tulip poplar plantations, and other forested areas with little to no oaks competing for a place in the canopy. These habitats have proven not desirable for cerulean warblers and thus present a potential opportunity for habitat restoration

or improvement. Creating a better mosaic of desirable tree species composition in the floodplain, particularly with more oaks, could be beneficial. Conducting forest stand improvements can enhance habitat by creating canopy heterogeneity and ensure future oak regeneration. In sum, cerulean warblers inhabit specific areas and it's a good idea to maintain and improve areas around them for post-breeding adults and dispersing young. Maintenance of their summer homes is important but creating all-new summer homes from the ground up requires large contiguous forested tracts with the right ingredients and it would be a feather in our cap if it happened, especially in the Midwest. We think one of our on-going vegetation management projects, the Bean Ridge Project located in Alexander County IL, may hold promise for establishing at least some all-new summer homes for cerulean warblers. Developed to mitigate forest health issues and future risks associated with unhealthy forest conditions, the project consists of 2,656 acres of vegetation treatments ranging from first entry shelterwood treatments, thinning, midstory manipulations, and burning. Management activities like these that improve tree vigor by promoting larger mast producing trees, wider spacing, and improved canopy heterogeneity may provide habitat benefits to species like cerulean warblers who were absent during pre-harvest bird surveys. Improved forest conditions with steeper topography, coupled with the presence of white oaks and riparian areas make the Bean Ridge Project a potential site for attracting cerulean warblers post-harvest. The largest and most consistent increases in cerulean warblers in the Appalachian Mountains occurred when residual basal area was between ~40 and 90 ft2. Partial harvests like those being implemented in the Bean Ridge Project may help us further develop ideas and skills in decoding potential summer home plans for cerulean warblers on the Shawnee.

Nonetheless, whether you are maintaining existing summer homes or trying to create some for cerulean warblers, active management not only benefits oak regeneration and healthier forests, it can also benefit other wildlife and recreation. Breaking up tree canopies, creating gaps, and lowering tree basal area can improve foraging and roosting habitat for federally listed bats. More sunlight to the ground may increase growth in the understory and provide better cover for white-tailed deer and nesting wild turkeys, and therefore, improve hunting opportunities. That's good economics since the Shawnee is among the most important recreational sites for deer and turkey hunters in Illinois and for out-of-state hunters. In essence, managing forests for birds like the cerulean warbler can be beneficial to many users in the region and provide opportunities for humans and wildlife species that need to coexist.

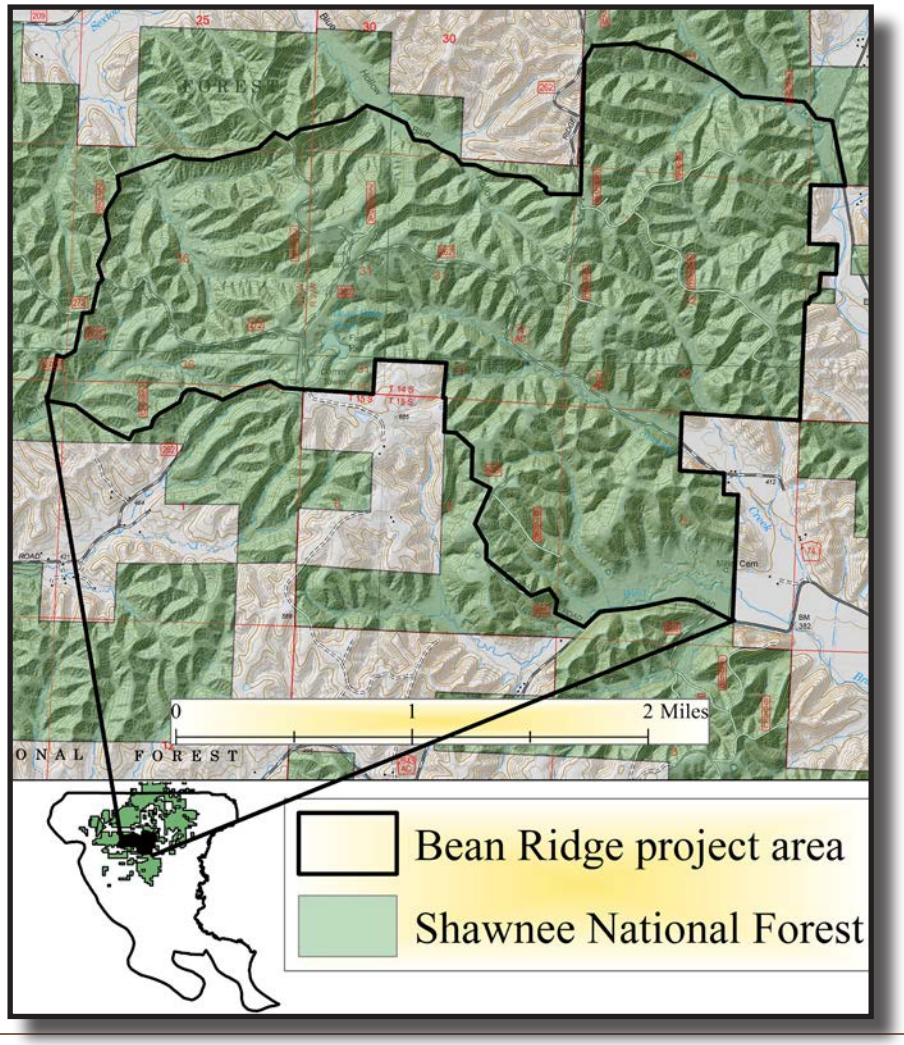

Photo 5: White-tailed deer (*Osocoileus virginianus*)

A conference for forest landowners in the Midwest.

The University of Illinois Extension Forestry is very excited to announce the return of the Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference! This conference has a 25+ year tradition and has been one of the largest conferences for woodland owners in the Midwest. It is back in 2024 on March 2nd at Highland Community College in Freeport, IL.

Register online at https://go.illinois.edu/TriState or by calling University of Illinois Extension at (815) 235-4125. Registration, including lunch, is $40 by February 23 and $50 afterwards. Early registration helps us make sure we have enough seating and lunch for everyone.

Event Date: March 2nd, 2024
Event Time: 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Location: Highland Community College Student Conference Center
Event Fee: $40.00
County: Stephenson

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

5 Great Replacements for Callery Pear

By Sarah Vogel, U of I Extension Horticulture Educator

Now considered an invasive species, Callery pear is a widely used ornamental flowering tree with negative effects on native ecosystems. Because it has not yet made the list of plants included in the Illinois Exotic Weed Act, this tree is still bought, sold, and planted. Until policies are amended, educational outreach and word of mouth are the best ways to combat the use of Callery pear. There are numerous Illinois native species that make suitable alternatives or replacements for Callery pear.

Photo 1: Callery pear that has invaded a roadside area.

Photo 2: Callery pear foliage

Photo 3: Callery pear thorns

Photo 4: Callery pear fruit

Photo 5: Callery pear bark

The Alternatives

American Fringetree
Chionanthus virginicus

Also known as Grancy Graybeard, the American fringetree is a medium-sized deciduous tree that blooms in late spring. Fragrant flower clusters have white fringe-like petals, and other features are the smooth, silver-gray bark and attractive fall foliage. Fringetree is a host plant for several insect species, and the fruit is enjoyed by many birds including the cardinal, blue jay, and pileated woodpecker.

Photo 6: American Fringetree in bloom.

American Hornbeam
Carpinus Caroliniana

The American Hornbeam, also called ironwood or musclewood, is a medium-sized tree with distinctive muscle-like fluted bark. While not known for showy flowers, hornbeam produces subtle catkins in spring. It's valued for its unique form and attractive, doubly-serrated leaves that turn yellow-orange in fall. Though it's naturally an understory

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tree, hornbeam tolerates a range of conditions, including clay soil and black walnut toxicity.

Photo 7: American Hornbeam foliage

Red Buckeye *Aesculus pavia*

In late spring, red buckeye exhibits 6-10" long panicles of beautiful orange-red flowers that attract hummingbirds. These blooms give way to shiny brown seeds inside a smooth husk. The large, palmately compound leaves are a glossy green in summer and drop early in fall. Red buckeye is hardy to zone 6 and may be marginally hardy in the colder climates of northern Illinois.

Photo 8: Red buckeye in bloom

Serviceberry *Amelanchier spp.*

Serviceberry is a small native tree with ornamental appeal similar to Callery pear. Showy white spring flowers result in colorful, edible summer fruit that attracts birds and other wildlife. They are hardy to zone 4 and prefer moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil, but tolerate many soil types in community environments. Downy serviceberry (A. arborea) offers beauty in every season, and smooth shadbush (A. laevis) has very tasty fruit. Autumn Brilliance (Amelanchier x grandiflora) is a natural hybrid of *A. laevis* and *A. arborea* that is commonly used in yards and parks.

Photo 9: Serviceberry in bloom

Photo 10: Serviceberry fruit

Flowering dogwood *Benthamidia florida,* previously *Cornus florida*

Flowering dogwood is another beautiful native tree with year-round seasonal interest, but don't eat the fruit! Though it's food for many songbirds, the bright red drupe (fruit) is quite bitter to humans. Flowering dogwood blooms in spring with large white bracts appearing to be large flower petals. The true flowers are small and yellow-green, located in the center of the bracts. Cultivated varieties boast more colorful flowers, fruit, and fall leaves, but some research suggests that cultivars are not as beneficial to pollinators and other wildlife.

Photo 11: Flowering dogwood in bloom

If you have questions about replacing callery pear with native alternatives, email University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator and IFA Director, Sarah Vogel at: sarahv@illinois.edu

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

DIY Corner
Build Your Own Bluebird Box

By Mike McMahan

For this issue, we will be introducing a new DIY article series. One strength of IFA is its members that have a wide range of skills, knowledge, and interests. We believe that these same members would be willing to share both their expertise and their experiences with other IFA members. Each newsletter issue will feature an individual DIY project where an IFA member describes the project and how to implement it.

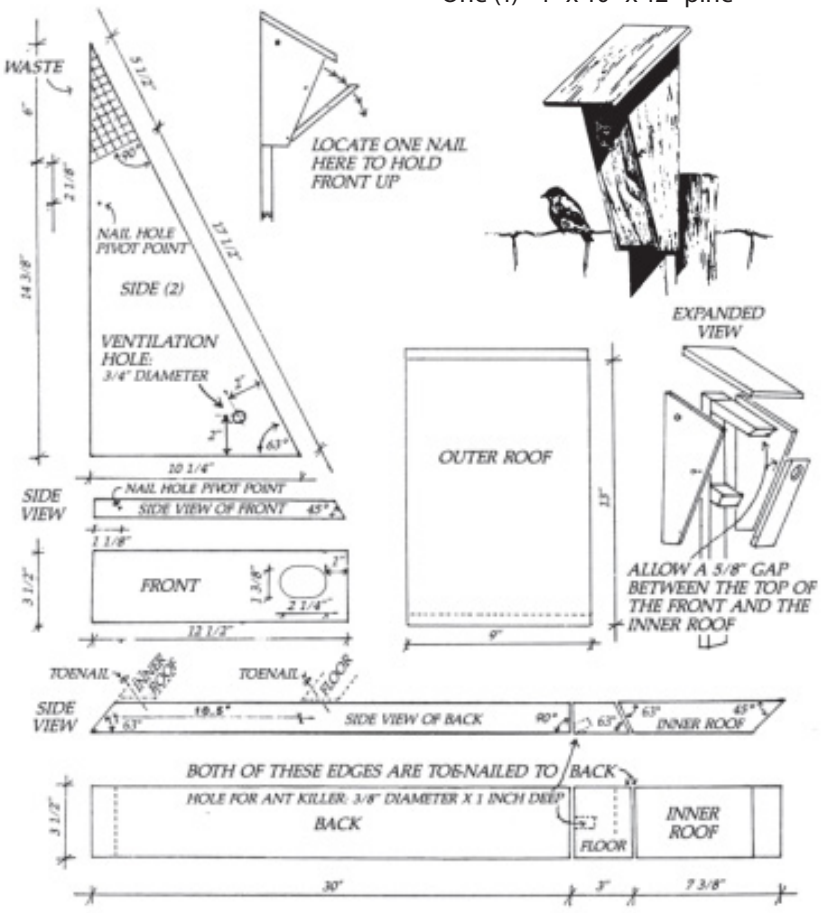
If you would like to share a project with other IFA members, please email Zach DeVillez at zachd@illinois.edu to discuss article ideas!

The first of these projects will be on Bluebirds – how to attract them, how to build their houses, where to place the houses, and how to encourage their use by Bluebirds. Once established, your Bluebird housing area will provide you with a great inside-view of this wonderful part of our wildlife treasure for years to come!

This first, experimental DYI project is related to Bluebirds. Over the next couple of newsletters, I will try to capture anything you wish to provide on this topic and summarize it here for others to learn from. As a major part of this project summary, I would like to develop a brief, concise calendar of events related to planning, establishing and supporting the bluebird habitat on our properties. Bear in mind, there may be some differences in what we can do and when based on where in Illinois we live. The information I am initially providing is based on conditions in Southernmost Illinois – just north of Western Kentucky.

A local wildlife expert, Steve Widowski, and Rick Street, District Conservationist, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Vienna, IL. have helped me develop this basic outline.

Step 1 - Build or Buy Premade Bluebird Box



Materials Needed to Build 10 Bluebird Peterson Boxes (shown in graphic below)

Sides
One (1) - 7/16" x 12" x 16' hardboard lap siding primed or one (1) - 1" x 12" x 16' pine. Cut into 18" pieces.
Front
One (1) - 1" x 4" x 12' pine
Back, Floor, and Inner Roof
34' x 2" x 4" pine
Outer Roof
One (1) - 1" x 10" x 12" pine

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When and Where to Place Bluebird Boxes and Other Considerations

Place a bluebird house in an open area of short-cut grass (former pasture is fine) with a few shrubs, bushes and trees within 100'. Fortunately, bluebirds are abundant enough to be around all year. They are, however, affected by the severe cold. For best results, the preferred time to hang up a bluebird house is late winter to early spring.

Bluebird houses should be about 100 yards apart on poles at least 5' high. If you are installing a new pole, a PCV or metal pole is best because predators have more difficulty climbing them but wood is still acceptable. A great source of additional detailed information is the IDNR publication entitled "Wood Projects for Illinois Wildlife". (See Source #5 below – Eastern Bluebird: pages 7 through 9.) One option for mounting a bluebird house is on the top of an existing fence post. This is probably the cheapest approach since fences are normally next to open fields and the wires make good resting perches outside the nest.

The shorter grass environment also reduces the risk of snakes getting into the birdhouse. One idea to help prevent snake-infestation is to install a regular metal coffee can around your mounting post just under the bottom of the birdhouse. You will have to cut a hole matching the size of your mounting post in the bottom of the can. Fill the gaps around the mounting post with a wire mesh of some sort.

The 1-1/2" diameter entrance hole should be facing away from the prevailing winds as well as away from direct sunlight. In many cases this is East, which is the orientation bluebirds generally prefer. This may not always be 100% possible but do the best you can. North-facing is a good second option.

Bluebirds feed on insects so the open/grassy environment should encourage insects and therefore help the bluebirds' diet. The nearby trees are there primarily for the youngsters when they are learning to fly. They go from their home to the tree and back safely until longer flights are possible.

Consider planting native berries and flowers nearby to attract insects, the primary bluebird food source. Species like blueberry bushes and Black-Eyed Susans are good choices.

If you open the door of a bluebird house, the birds will not abandon it. Their sense of smell is not sufficient for them to hardly know you were even there.

Late in the Fall, open the bird house and clean out the inside. Get as much of the grass out as you can within reason. This is to reduce the possibility of problems with mites.

If you have any comments or creative additions to add to what I have presented above, especially as related to geographical concerns throughout our state, please contact me at (618) 977-3415 or via email at mcmahan3465@hotmail.com. I will include your input in the next newsletter about this DYI Project. We have until next spring to get everything ready so this is good planning time.

Sources:

1. Steve Widowski – wildlife expert

2. North American Bluebird Society, Inc. publications and website www.nabluebirdsociety.org.

3. Rick Street, District Conservationist, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Vienna, IL.

4. Link to IDNR publication "Wood Projects for Illinois Wildlife": https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/publications/Documents/00000211.pdf

5. Internet Article "Backyard Bluebird Houses: 23 Questions and Answers (Explained) by Mike Zhang, Founder of FamilyLifeShare.

History of Conservation in Illinois

Installment #46

by Dave Gillespie, IFA Secretary

This account of the history of conservation in Illinois was written by Joseph P. Schavilje in 1941. This installment begins where installment # 45 ended.

Many Forestry laws were enacted by the Illinois General Assembly during the period 1925 to 1941, which helped promote the expanded program conducted by Mr. Tomasek. Those of importance are listed as follows:

1925 – The establishment of State forests and nurseries to be under the control of the of the newly created Department of Conservation.

1931 – An act was passed giving consent, by the State of Illinois, to the United States for acquisition of land for a national forest.

1933 – A law giving the Department of Conservation power and authority on behalf of the State to make contractual agreements with the Federal government as to emergency conservation work.

1935 – State Planning Board created to investigate the natural resources of the State of Illinois. Among the projects listed is the conservation of forests.

1937 – An act giving authority to the Department of Conservation to enter into agreements with appropriate Federal agencies in order to better effect cooperative undertakings in the conservation of plants and forests.

1937 – A law authorizing the Director of the Department of Conservation to report serious forest fire hazards in any geographic district to the Governor, who may issue a proclamation declaring that withing such areas it would be unlawful to set fire to any wood, brush, grass, grain or stubble without first having obtained the written consent and approval of the Director.

1939 – The establishment of a Forest Nurseries Fund by which all monies received from the sale of planting stock shall be paid into a special fund. Appropriations from the fund shall be made only to the Department of Conservation for nursery operation and for the reimbursing the Federal government for labor.

ILLINOIS Forestry Association

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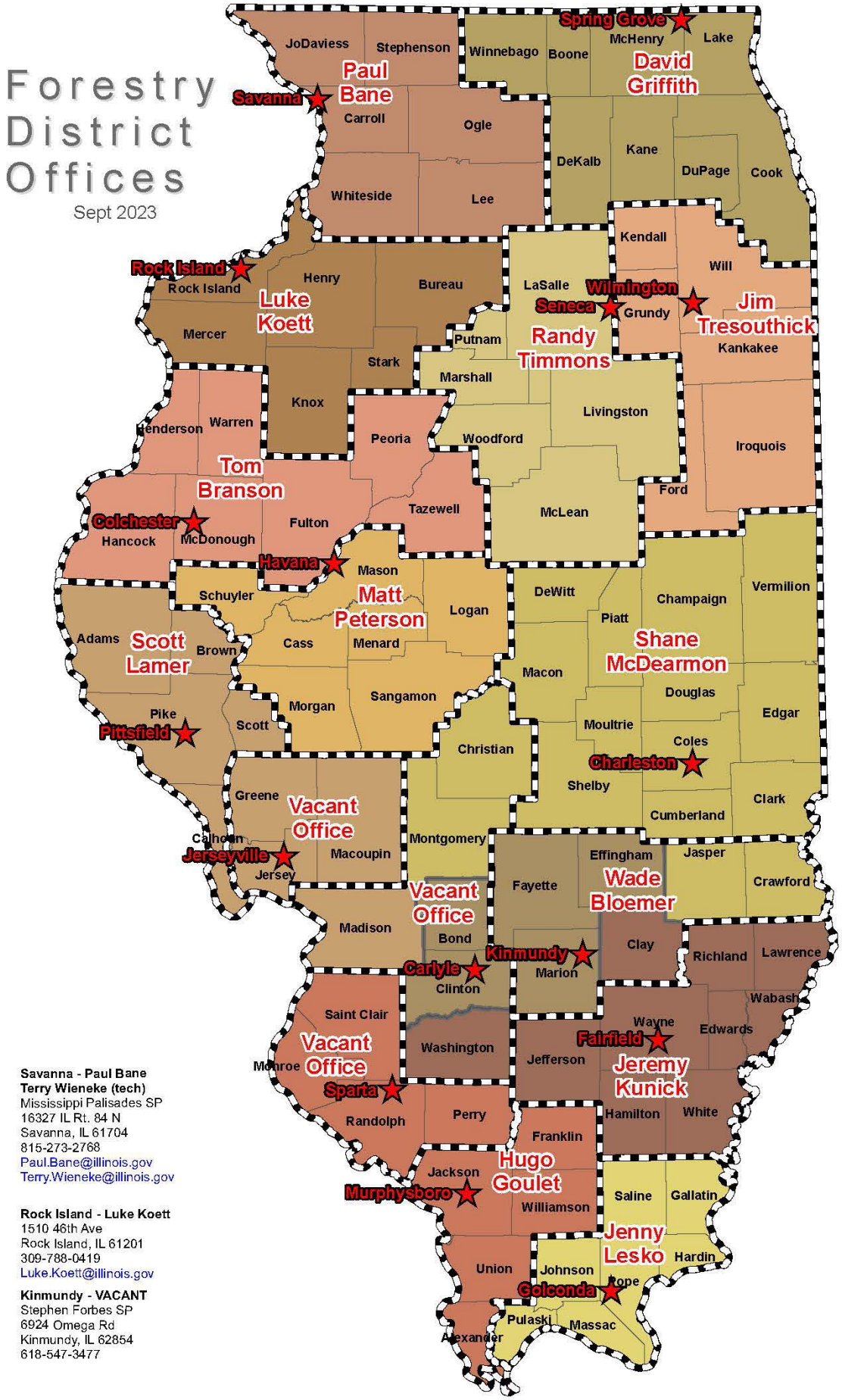

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