

FORESTS HAVE A FUTURE

in

THE WISCONSIN RIVER VALLEY



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In ancient days, when Wisconsin's greatest river entered the broad, gentle valley near the end of its long journey, it literally cast aside its extra burden and prepared to join the Father of Waters unhampered. Its burden was sand: most of it was left between the stone bluffs that wall the river valley. Ages later much of this river-built land was cleared of trees and seeded to farm crops. Near the lower slopes of the bordering hills it proved to be good soil. Closer to the river it behaved for farmers like all sands: it warmed early in the spring, plowed easily, lost fertility quickly, yielded well only during seasons of high rainfall, and rolled with the wind to form dunes and "blow-outs" wherever humus and rootlets had completely disappeared. But unlike most sandy soils, being near to the great river its sub-soils were kept eternally moist. Tree roots easily reach this moist sub-soil, and especially the roots of the white and Norway pines. Where crops have failed, plantings of these pines have succeeded wonderfully. In them are the promise of the future for much of this land--forests of pine.

The state of Wisconsin, the local communities, and the wood using industries of the valley each have something to offer to make forestry and its chief by-product, recreation, attractive and profitable along the lower Wisconsin. What they offer, and what the landowner can do to get the most through their assistance, is explained in the following pages.

Trees For Forest Planting

The Wisconsin Conservation Department operates a number of forest tree nurseries, and offers these trees to landowners at a very low cost per tree. It requires about 1000 trees to reforest an acre of open land. White and Norway pines are the two species of trees which have proved most satisfactory, based on 25 years of testing different trees.

Most planting is done in the spring of the year. Orders for trees are to be placed with the State Conservation Department during the winter. Landowners may place their orders directly with the Conservation Department, but for most of them it would be advisable to place their order through the office of the Agricultural Agent of the county in which their land is located. These men are often able to assist in arranging economical transportation of the trees from the nursery immediately after the trees are dug, thereby insuring fresh stock for planting.

The prices of tree planting stock may change slightly from year to year, but on the average, three year old pine seedlings will cost \$7.50 per thousand trees, and four year old transplants will cost \$15.00 per thousand. Transplant stock usually survives better and grows faster immediately after planting, but the seedling stock is entirely satisfactory.

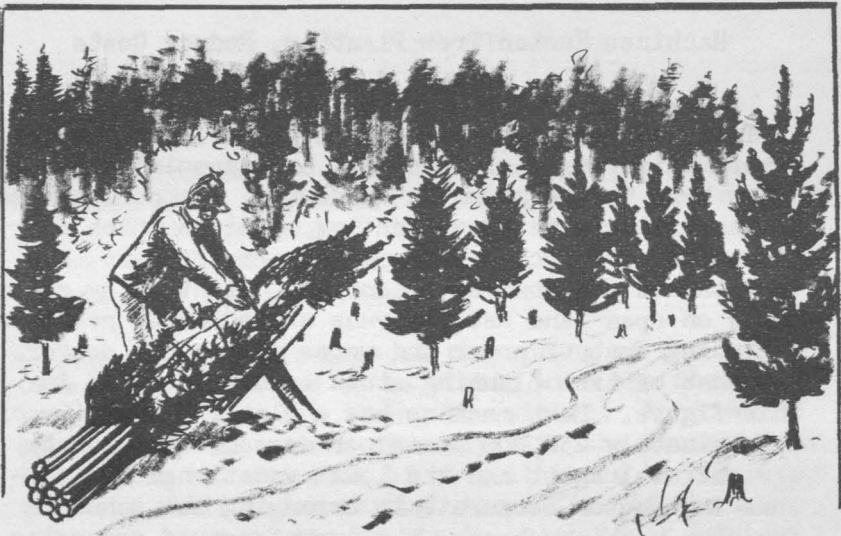


Machines Hasten Tree Planting, Reduce Costs

To make tree planting more economical, to insure a more uniform job of planting, and especially to offer help to the absentee landowner, the communities in the valley have tree planting machines which can be rented, or which, with special arrangements, can be obtained for contract planting. Planting by machine on open land usually runs around \$6.00 per acre, including cost of power and wages of tractor driver. The cost of tree planting stock is not included in this figure. Each machine has a planting capacity of approximately 250,000 trees per season. The county agricultural agent and the local vocational agriculture instructor cooperate in arranging the schedule for each machine; hence, the importance of arranging for planting stock through them if an owner intends to use a machine.

How Are Tree Plantings Taxed?

Wisconsin's forest crop law applies to plantations. This law provides a fixed land tax over a 50 year period for any wooded or planted area, 40 or more acres in size, used exclusively for the production of a timber crop. Under the terms of this law, which in effect is a 50 year contract with the state, the owner pays a land tax of 20 cents per acre per year, and there is no additional tax when the trees are harvested (Land in southern Wisconsin, outside of a forest protection district). Forms for applying for forest crop classification may be obtained from the Wisconsin Conservation Department in Madison, the state agency which administers the law. Applications for establishing forest crop law tax rates must be submitted to the Conservation Department by October 1st each year, in order to have land under the new tax schedule in the following year.



Income Can Begin Early

Plantations can provide a succession of crops before the final saw-log crop is ready for harvest. With pine trees, especially Norway pine, a light thinning can be made when the trees are 8 to 9 years old. The trees removed then are suitable for Christmas trees. One notable example of what can be realized from such a thinning is the pine plantation at the University of Wisconsin Experiment Station at Hancock. One hundred eighty trees were taken out of the plantation in early December. Income from the sale of these trees, on an acre basis, paid for the cost of planting an acre of trees eight years earlier, paid taxes and interest, and left a net balance for the owner of approximately \$40.00. There is still a full stand of trees on the land.

A second thinning, at about 20 years of age can produce from 150 to 200 fence posts per acre. If these posts are peeled, seasoned, and given a cold-soak treatment in oil with creosote or other oil-mixed preservatives, the posts will be at least as durable as white cedar posts, and possibly more durable.

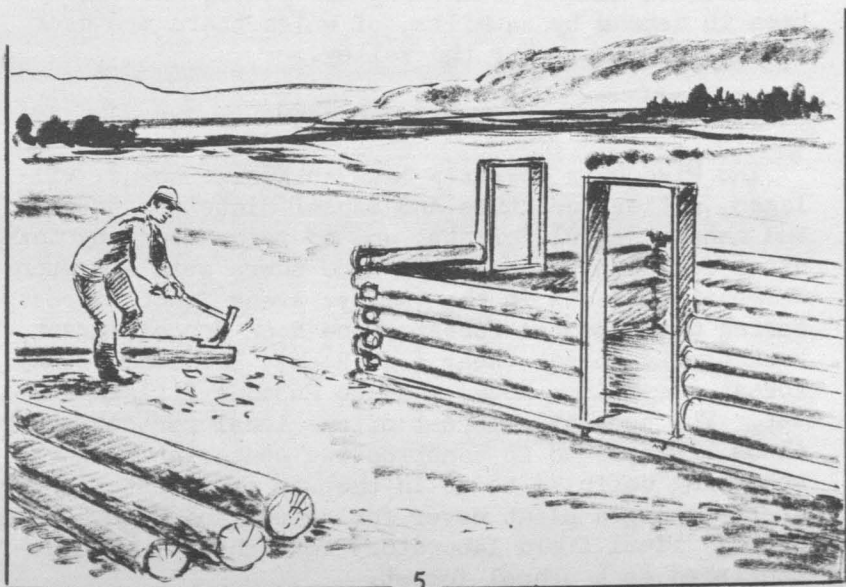
Thinnings at age 30 years, 35 years and 40 years will produce three to four cords of pulpwood or box boards per acre at each thinning. These cuttings will remove all but about 250 trees per acre, which will grow into the final saw-log crop.

Is Pine the Only Tree to Plant?

Some low, moist areas will not be suitable for pine. Cottonwood grew well on these soils in the past, and should grow well again on this land. These trees are best started from cuttings. Experiments and demonstrations in the use of cottonwood cuttings will be established in the valley. Good cottonwood can make box bolts in less than 20 years.

Markets For The Final Tree Crops

The uses of trees taken out in thinnings have been mentioned. Saw-logs, cabin logs, pulpwood and box board bolts are the kinds of products which comprise the final timber crop.





The industries which use these raw materials are already located within the valley, except the pulp mills, which are 150 miles up-river. Wisconsin dairy industries use enormous quantities of wood containers, and have, therefore, created a relatively stable market for box boards. There are at present four box or veneer manufacturing plants either in the valley, or within 20 miles of it.

Softwood lumber, including the pines, have always been in demand by sawmills, of which there are over 30 located in or near the valley.

Community Forests

The Wisconsin forestry laws authorize towns, villages, cities, counties and school districts to own and manage school forests, and to raise money by taxation for this purpose. In 1950 there were six such community forests in the valley: Arena School Forest, Spring Green School Forest, Lone Rock School Forest, Sauk County Forest (Near Lone Rock), Richland County Forest (Near Lone Rock) and the Muscoda Village Forest. The community forest offers local persons and clubs, interested in constructive conservation work, something definite to do in the way of forest planting, or restoring a plant cover for ground and game. It is also an ideal field laboratory for schools, when established as a school forest.

Community forests are not subject to any tax, state or local. The Wisconsin Conservation Department has agreed to furnish free tree stock for forestry plantings to any local unit which owns 20 or more acres of community forest land, and has registered this land with the Conservation Department as a community forest.

Some of the school forests now operating were given by local individuals, others have been purchased. It would be difficult to name any more beneficial use for unproductive land than to have it made a school or community forest by way of a gift dedicated to the public interest in the valley.

Sporting and Recreational Uses of Land Will Increase

The cabin logs which can be harvested from pine plantations need not be shipped from the valley, although there is a wide market for them in many parts of the state.

Huge new water reservoirs up-stream promise to provide a more steady flow in the Wisconsin River than has ever before been possible, banishing spring floods and summer "lows". Vigorous policing by the state board on water pollution assures a flow of relatively clear, clean water. These factors make for more abundant fishing, which today is definitely on the increase.

Pine plantations, interspersed with native oaks and other hardwoods, provide increased cover with abundant food for game birds and animals. Scores of small pools in the lowlands adjacent to the river have long been ideal hunting grounds for migrant waterfowl.

To visualize cabin sites along the river fringed in pine, cabin logs grown from local plantations, a cleaner, steadier river providing boating and better fishing, more game food and cover on lands not suited to farming, is to glimpse something of the sporting attractions of a truly scenic region.

