Greenleaves

ISSUE #1, 2026

Member Newsletter of **Bruce Grey Woodlands Association**

BGWA.CA

Upcoming BGWA Events:

Chainsaw Certification course April 11-12

Women's Only Chainsaw Safety course April 18

Chainsaw Maintenance course April 25

Geology Hike at Woodford late April / early May

Would you like to host a member tour of your woodland property?

Contact Lloyd Holbrook
holbrooklloyd8@gmail.com

Upcoming Board Meetings

May 12 @ 6 PM - location TBD

Members Welcome!

Contact secretary@bgwa.ca to confirm format (virtual, in-person, hybrid) and location or zoom link.

BGWA's vision: Promoting healthy forests and ecosystems in Bruce and Grey Counties through education, recreation and sustainable management practices.

bgwa.ca
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Mailing address:
BGWA, Box 45, Neustadt
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President's Message

By Jim White

Dear BGWA members

At the risk of stating the obvious—what a winter! As a cross-country skier, I couldn't have asked for better conditions. Since Christmas, I've been out twice a week on near-perfect trails. In all my years teaching young skiers in the JackRabbit Ski Program, I've never seen a session cancelled due to too much snow—but this year, even road closures made it happen.

With the days growing longer, we've also tapped a few trees for our annual maple syrup ritual—snowshoes were essential just to get around. I also had a chance to check in on my bee hives and was pleased to find them strong and healthy. I've given them pollen patties and sugar syrup to help bridge the gap until the first blossoms. And yes—my first sting of the season has already happened.

We had an excellent turnout at our AGM, along with a fantastic presentation from Tony Fleischmann. It was great to reconnect with familiar faces and meet new members. I hope you enjoyed Tony's presentation, as well as our updates on BGWA's 2025 educational events, financial position, and our outlook for educational activities in 2026.

A special thank you to Tony for sharing his experience navigating the complex regulatory and political landscape required to successfully lead an aerial spray program targeting the invasive spongy moth (formerly known as the gypsy moth) in an urban setting. Tony has kindly provided a summary of his presentation in this issue of *GreenLeaves*. We're also fortunate to include Susan McGowan's update on MNR tracking of spongy moth populations through 2025. Full reports are available on the BGWA website under Members Only – Documents.

If you'll indulge me for a moment—we are extremely proud of what BGWA accomplished last year. We hosted 12 educational events, which may be a record for both number and diversity of topics. Our membership grew to 141 in 2025—a 21% increase since our inception. We hope this growth reflects an engaged and active membership, one that continues to inspire volunteerism and supports opportunities for members to learn from one another in a welcoming environment. We remain focused on Bruce and Grey Counties, and your ideas matter—please continue to share them.

This year, we also say thank you to several directors who have stepped down from board responsibilities: Becky Boumeester, Heather Zurbrigg, David Hartley, and Kevin Predon. We are grateful for their contributions over the years.

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President's Message (cont'd)

At the same time, it is our pleasure to welcome two new directors: Natalie Mechalko, Planning Ecologist with Grey County, and Chris Sanderson, Environmental Services Supervisor with Bruce County. We are fortunate to have professionals of their caliber contributing their time and expertise to BGWA in addition to managing full-time career responsibilities. You'll have an opportunity to learn more about Natalie and Chris in this issue of GreenLeaves. As an interesting note, a slight majority of our directors have formal training in environmental sciences and forestry. We have an extremely strong technical foundation of expertise on our board of directors.

Our first board meeting of 2026 took place last week. Your elected directors for 2026 are: Donna Lacey, Mike Fry, Chris Sanderson, Natalie Mechalko, Jim Coles, Jim Penner, Susan McGowan, Lloyd Holbrook, Larry Cluchey, Ben Sharpe, Ron Stewart, and Jim White. The newly elected executive team includes: Mike Fry (Secretary), Larry Cluchey (Treasurer), Ben Sharpe (Vice President), and myself as President.

Last weekend, Susan McGowan and Jill Mandigo co-led a winter tree identification walk at Massie Hills. Despite deep snow, participants enjoyed the outing—identifying trees and even a few animal tracks along the way.

Looking ahead, on April 26 we'll be joining Beth Gilhespie at Boyd's Crevices for a geology hike. You may remember Beth as our 2024 AGM guest speaker and author of the Walking Through Time series, which explores the forces that shaped the Niagara Escarpment. We hope you can join us—check your email for the invitation and RSVP details.

This weekend also marks the start of our spring Chainsaw Safety Courses, led by instructor Gerald Guenkel. The courses offers a great balance of hands-on learning—covering safe felling, limbing, and bucking—as well as classroom instruction that explains the "how" and "why," supported by an excellent take-home reference guide.

March 21st - Awareness Course

April 11-12th - Certification Course

April 18th - Women's Only Awareness Course

April 25th – Maintenance and Sharpening Course

I hope I don't sound like a broken record each GreenLeaves issue asking / pleading for members to submit an article, pictures of interest, games or stories of interest for children. We encourage members to introduce themselves and brag about their property – what makes their property so special to their family. We hope that you will take a few minutes to share with us your contributions that can be submitted to: newsletter@bgwa.ca.

I hope to see you out enjoying the learning experiences and friendship with others offered by our BGWA Events and Education Committee – 100% locally grown!

Warm regards, Jim

The Elm Recovery Project: 27 Years Later

By Catherine Goddard

Why were millions of white elms (*Ulmus americana*) succumbing to Dutch elm disease (DED), while lone survivors continued growing in fields, on urban streets or on country roads? How could humans help more of these threatened native trees survive? These questions prompted the late Henry Kock, who worked as an interpretive horticulturist at the University of Guelph Arboretum in Guelph, Ontario, and wrote books about propagating native trees, to found the Elm Recovery Project (ERP).

Henry was intrigued by the large elms dotted across Ontario that were somehow able to survive after becoming infected with DED. The Elm Recovery Project was created to assist the recovery of white elm by identifying existing elms, archiving information about them, breeding disease-tolerant elms and reintroducing genetically diverse populations of these young elms into the landscape. ERP is a non-commercial project funded by individual donors, foundations and others; it receives no government funding.

The white elm's beauty and ability to withstand harsh environmental stressors led to it being intensively planted in urban and rural areas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The overarching canopies of elms formed lush, shady corridors along residential streets in many North American cities. DED, a vascular wilt disease, arrived in North America in the 1930s in wood infected with the fungal pathogens *Opbiostoma ulmi* and O. *novo-ulmi*. In response to a pathogen, which is carried by one exotic and one native beetle, elm trees try to contain the disease by closing off water transport vessels, resulting in the affected part of the tree dying.

Elms often die within months of being infected. Scientists now know that the disease is "shared" with other elms growing nearby through root grafts, allowing the disease quick access to closely planted street trees. This is a cautionary tale for municipalities and developers: avoid monocultures by planting more than one species of tree in a neighbourhood. Trees, especially in polluted, difficult urban settings, have a better chance of long-term survival if planted in diverse communities.

Since the Elm Recovery Project started in 1998, citizen scientists have collected information about 900 survivor elms for arboretum staff, who have managed to visit 600 of those trees over the years. The data is carefully archived and all the trees are identified and mapped. I remember my dad's excitement when he told me he'd figured out a method to determine the height of a very old elm in Guelph! Many folks in our city knew about the project and eagerly participated. Even today, the ERP regularly comes up in conversation among people interested in the progress being made and the number of saplings being released for planting. Elms discovered farther off the beaten path continue to be added to the database.

We're happy to report that new generations of carefully selected elms are being planted out with good odds of surviving DED. In 2024 elm trees that had been grafted a few years before were curated for Eastern Ontario, including Ottawa, and were planted on public property near existing mature elms. ERP plans to propagate batches by region and distribute them as a successful inventory of trees becomes available. The project always anticipates attrition during the growing process, but sometimes there are trees left over from the project needs; any extras are sold to the public at the Arboretum's plant sale, usually accompanied by information about the sapling's origin. Alison Morrison, manager of horticulture at University of Guelph Arboretum, notes, "We are still in the process of ensuring there are two or more healthy specimens of all our tolerant clones in the seed orchard/long-term gene bank. When we are complete we will explore more project opportunities."

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It should be noted that the arboretum's Elm Recovery Program refers to disease *tolerance*, not *resistance*, as many falsely assume. Henry's goal was not to breed an elm that was reliably resistant to the disease, as some agricultural-sector projects have attempted to do. ERP's focus remains to save the white elm species from severe decline, even extinction, by creating a "dating service for lonely elms," as Henry was fond of saying. Since the very old survivors were often physically distant from other surviving elms, Henry realized they should be brought together to share their genetic heritage by cross-pollination. Henry and others involved in the project understood that, to survive as a species, all white elms not only had to have some tolerance to DED, but also broad genetic resilience – the ability to survive the many threats they would face in the future, such as climate extremes, new diseases and pests, airborne pollutants and other stressors. ERP's breeding program preserves and encourages genetic diversity as well as DED tolerance.

The first ERP plants were grown from living tissue (scions) collected from disease-tolerant, older trees and grafted onto elm saplings, creating a genetically identical clone of the large, isolated old tree. After five years, the small trees were inoculated with Dutch elm disease. (Injections have been made more recently as well.) Each clonal sapling's response to the infection was closely monitored for two months and periodically evaluated. The young trees were rated from high tolerance to zero tolerance, i.e., death. The top-performing clonal saplings were then transplanted to a separate breeding orchard at the arboretum where they could cross-pollinate with other young clones and serve as a seed bank. About 200 parent trees have been screened through the ERP inoculation trials since 2003, with the clonal saplings maturing to produce seed in 2015. When I recently visited the Henry Kock Propagation Centre, which opened in 2010, more than 100 seed-grown white elm seedlings were in the nursery.

Collecting seed in the gene bank orchard is laborious, as the ripened seeds must be gathered before they fall to ensure that at least the mother tree is known. At the University of Guelph Arboretum, white elms are being studied at different ages and stages. The longitudinal, "tree time" element of the study is critical for many reasons. As Alison points out, "Young trees don't harbour the disease-carrying beetles. The beetles need the fissured bark of the older tree to lay their eggs and provide habitat. This happens at about 12 to 15 years so the trees don't get exposed to the disease until then." The inoculation process in the ERP speeds up this exposure.

Elms have been known to live several hundred years. However, since the introduction of DED into Ontario was confirmed in 1946, their life span has been reduced; it is exceptional for them to live 80 to 100 years. With the ERP there is hope that the genetically focused, disease-tolerant seedlings may achieve the longevity of their ancestors.

The ERP plans to partner with municipalities and conservation authorities to establish "satellite seed orchards" around the province where a selection of top-performing and locally adapted elms will be planted. The elm seed orchard at the UoG Arboretum, just one of several gene banks, will serve as a long-term, living archive of genetic material for the project. The satellite seed orchards will benefit natural elm populations by bringing together disease-tolerant trees that might have been otherwise too isolated to interbreed.

The project – a very long-term mission – has accomplished several of its objectives. It continues to collect seed, keep meticulous records and study, monitor and propagate elms. The project's success is determined in part by the number of genetically diverse, disease-tolerant elm clones that have been planted in the gene bank nursery and out into other areas in Ontario. As for the seed-grown trees, Alison says, "We aren't sure yet what percentage of seedlings are tolerant. Much of that is too early to say. *cont'd*

I would say that it would be a success to distribute genetically diverse seed or seedlings even without understanding the tolerance to DED.

The strength in their genetic diversity might lead to tolerance of other pests and diseases and climate conditions they have yet to meet."

It should be noted that genetic investigations and longitudinal studies potentially involving generations of scientists are very difficult to fund. Financial help from the public is always welcome.

Henry Kock deserves our thanks and admiration for conceiving and putting into action this project

to save the majestic American elm from the ravages of an introduced disease. Looking to the future, we hope that a host-pathogen balance will eventually emerge, as is the case with elm species in Asia, where better-adapted trees frequently become infected by DED but are usually able to survive infection. May future generations enjoy the beauty and benefits of this awe-inspiring tree!

Catherine Goddard continues her joyful engagement with nature and native plant enthusiasts in Guelph, Ontario, where she helped establish the Tree Trust. Inquiries about the Elm Recovery Project can be directed to **elmrecovery@uoguelph.ca**.

Success Stories

In 2022, while visiting Origin Native Plant Nursery just north of Guelph, I discovered a sad-looking elm sapling that had clearly outgrown the confines of its four-litre (one-gallon) pot. The nursery owner took pity on the sapling and passed it into my care, telling me they'd received it along with other plants from another native plant nursery that was about to close. The seed came from the famous Alice Street elm in Guelph. I had recently visited this ancient elm and was delighted with the gift of its progeny. The sapling has grown into a small tree. I'm hoping it will tolerate DED as well as its "mother" did. *Catherine Goddard*

A superb elm in Prince Edward County was once slated for removal by the county's public works department. There was quite a fight over that tree. Luckily, the environmental side won and the tree remains a cherished landmark. White elm is my favourite native plant. I grew up with the majestic trees lining neighbourhood streets before the appearance of Dutch elm disease. Many of the white elms in Whitby, Ontario, were a metre (three feet) or more DBH (diameter at breast height) and over 35 metres (40 feet) high. In 1954 Hurricane Hazel brought down some magnificent trees. *John Foster*

How you can help!

*Learn more about Dutch elm disease.

*Never prune or wound elms between April and November as this will open the tree to the beetle carrying the disease and, possibly, other pathogens and pests.

*Report older elms in Ontario that are in relatively good health with a circumference of greater than 250 centimetres (eight feet) to **elmrecovery@uoguelph.ca.**

*Plant a white elm sapling from the arboretum's Elm Recovery Project when they become available.

*Donate to **arboretum.uoguelph.ca/donations** to keep this project thriving!

The Forest Legacy of NeighbourWoods North

By Lloyd Lewis

I first met, newly retired physician, Gord Edwards in 2016, and at that time, we were both asking the same question. In our golden years, "how can we make a positive environmental impact in the Owen Sound area?" The simple answer was, "let's plant trees together," and thus was born the concept of forming a community tree organization, which we eventually called NeighbourWoods North. (NWN)

Now, 10 years later, NWN has planted thousands of trees and shrubs, created gardens, developed walking paths, and installed benches in new nature settings that are enjoyed by many. However, this rewarding, but challenging journey hasn't always been smooth and along the way, I've often thought of this quote:

> "Ignorance is the most underrated virtue"

In 2017, before any trees could be planted, our first year as an organization was taken up by making presentations to create awareness, seek organisational insurance, and to promote funding for our project ideas. Fortunately, in the end, Owen Sound Field Naturalists came to our rescue, allowing us to amalgamate with them, thus taking advantage of their charitable status and insurance. We continue to be forever grateful.

Gord and I weren't long in recognizing, that a potential starting project might be the 28 acres surrounding the Owen Sound hospital. In 2017, the grounds were rather barren and a formidable feature for patients as they approached the hospital on the hilltop. Shortly after, we presented our ideas to the hospital administration, and we were delighted at their positive response. Thus, began our 10 year plan to revitalise and naturalize the grounds for the benefit of the patients, staff and surrounding residents.

As community projects go, this project start was tremendous! For the first year, our project goal was divided into three parts. Firstly, to add beauty to the hospital west entrance, by planting 40 flowering crabapples. Secondly, to eventually reduce the impact of the NW winds, we planted a windrow of 80 spruce trees. And finally, to create an 8 acre mixed forest, planting nearly 3000 small tree seedlings. Over multiple weekends, hundreds of volunteers turned out in all sorts of weather to contribute.

Of course, all of this required funding which was provided from private donors, and initiated by a generous contribution from Gord and Linda Edwards. But, also various businesses sponsors and landscape companies, offered free supplies and their heavy machinery services. In addition, Mike Fry at Grey Sauble Conservation managed to get us a federal grant and GSCA also assisted by machine planting half of the seedlings. Our first year was off to a wonderful start.

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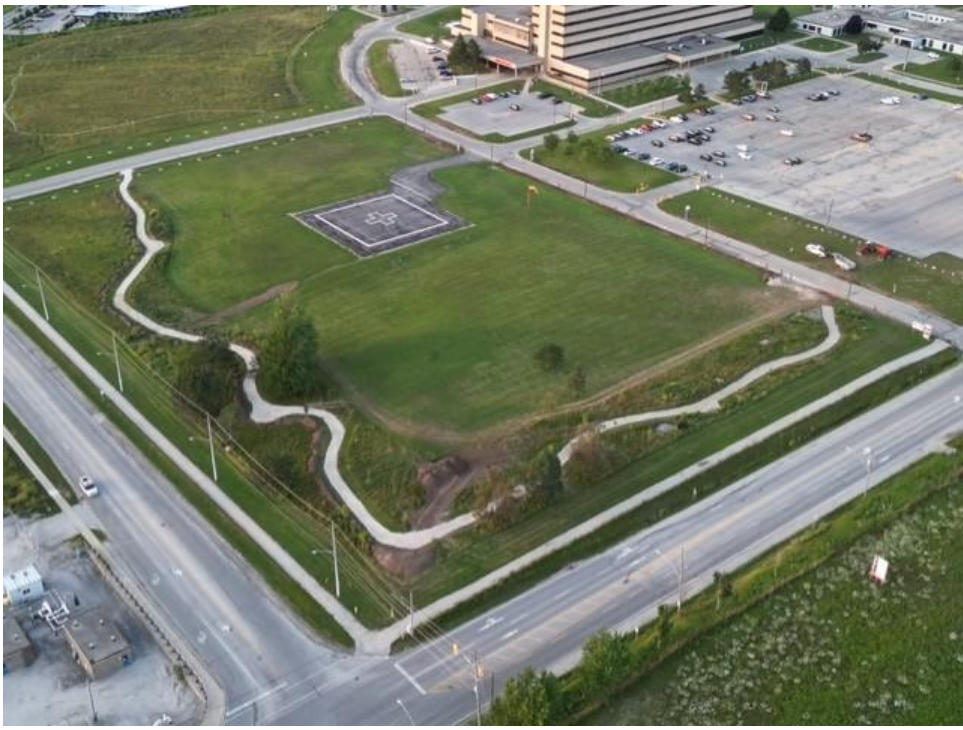
We were quickly reminded that with naturalization projects such as ours, you can't just turn the key and walk away. In the subsequent years, a great deal of energy has been spent maintaining what we have already planted, such as regular mulching, watering, wrapping and replanting. However, with each year, we have also focused on a new project, and now 8 years later, the hospital grounds are unrecognisable compared to the start.

Enhancing the space, we now have created a wheelchair accessible "healing path" along with a further 1.5km of walking trails through new and old forests. Thousands more trees and shrubs have added beauty and biodiversity, making the outdoor experience far more rewarding. Along this pathway we have added a pollinating meadow garden, and taken advantage of nearby wet ecosystems which we have enhanced through new plantings of species that thrive in such conditions. In fact, we have introduced over 100 new plant species to the area, promoting a healthier environment through native biodiversity.



However, perhaps our most visible project has been the creation of an Island Welcoming Garden at the front entrance. Led by Vicky Thompson, what was previously an uninspiring car turning circle is now an oasis of native plants, trees and rocks, creating a stimulating and colourful greeting to the 10's of thousands of patients and visitors who walk through the front doors.
To be successful throughout the years requires a dedicated committee and a group of like minded supporters, who recognise the intrinsic value of nature projects such as ours. Looking back, it would have been very easy to quit, as we have faced many challenges and frustrations. For example, in our first year of 2018 there was a significant summer drought. On 6 occasions we called in the fire department to fill our water tanks so teams of volunteers could water the new forest. Despite our efforts nearly half the seedlings died. Furthermore, rodents have killed many trees and only last winter, rabbits destroyed 18 of our prized and expensive flowering crabapple trees.

In addition, we have had to lobby to prevent a mature forest on the grounds from being turned into a parking lot, and we now face a big challenge from highly invasive species such as phragmites and Japanese Knotweed which can choke out much of our efforts. Add to all this, erosion to our pathways from extreme weather, and it's impressive that most of our supporters continue to happily offer their assistance.

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Now, looking to the future, maybe our biggest challenge is the same one that many volunteer organisations face. How do you attract younger volunteers as your group ages and in some cases get burnt out? We at NWN have tried many approaches with limited success, which in the end, makes us realise, over the past 8 years, how lucky we have been with the helpers we currently have.

The Owen Sound hospital project is nearing an end, but the maintenance will always continue. Still, the final touches are to be added in order to reach our goal of creating a first class and engaging public space that has been built by our community and shared by all. We are still seeking funding for memorial benches and searching for historical artefacts, such as old farm equipment, or outdoor art that could adorn the pathways and provide points of interest. In addition, we hope to add educational interpretive signage along with bird and bat boxes.

NeighbourWoods North has worked with Grey County, assisting with the landscaping at their headquarters building, and we look forward to continuing this relationship, along with Georgian Bluffs and our local schools. However, up to this point, our " jewel in the crown" has been our accomplishment with the Brightshores hospital, seeing the public use the space, and hoping our work will be a catalyst for other community projects in the future. After all, the legacy of projects like ours is immeasurable, improving as it matures through the decades to follow, and impacting future generations that we will never meet.

"There can be no purpose more enspiriting than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us."

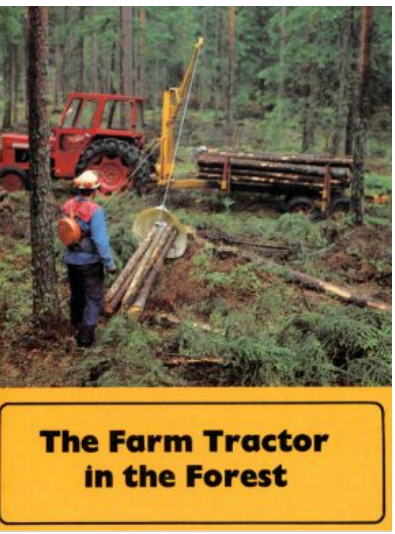
-E.O. Wilson

Grey County Rain Garden creation

Sunset over trees at Owen Sound hospital

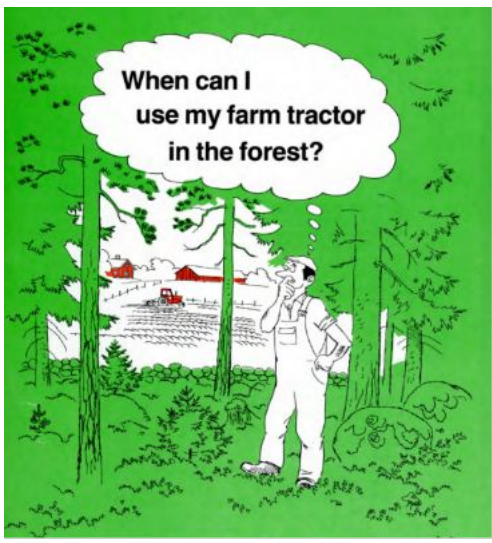
The Farm Tractor in the Forest

By Gerald Guenkel



The Farm Tractor in the Forest by Milton Nilsson is a practical guide that explains how standard agricultural tractors can be adapted for forestry work. Written for small woodlot owners that can not afford specialized logging machinery, the manual demonstrates how farm tractors—already common on rural properties—could be modified for skidding logs, hauling timber, and performing light land-clearing operations. Nilsson emphasizes safety, mechanical adjustments, and cost-effectiveness, making the book especially valuable for farmers supplementing their income with woodlot operations.

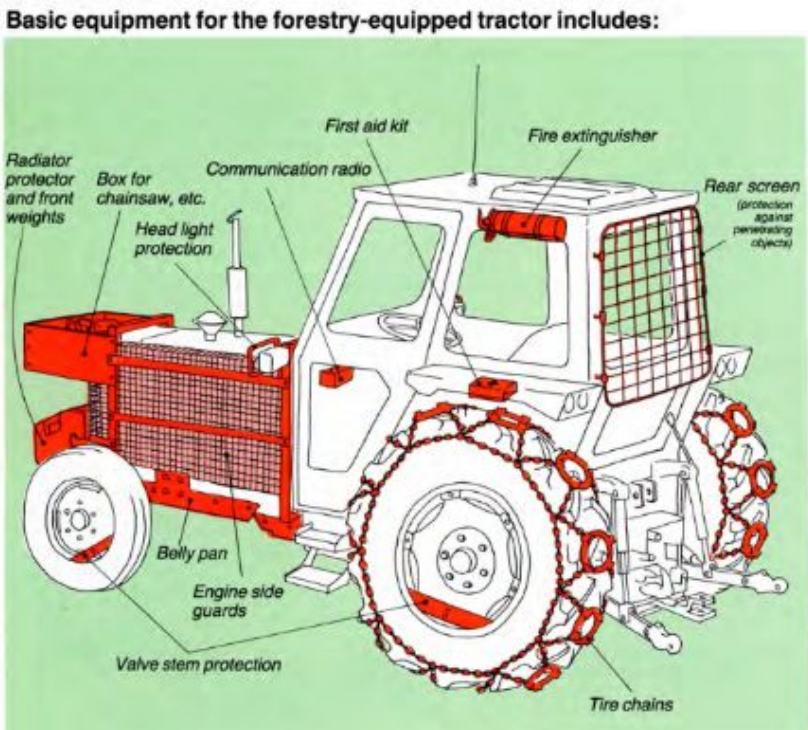
The manual details specific equipment attachments such as winches, logging arches, chains, and protective guards. It explains how to improve traction with tire chains or ballast, how to protect the tractor's undercarriage and operator from debris, and how to distribute loads to prevent tipping. Nilsson provides step-by-step operating techniques for skidding logs, working on slopes, and maneuvering in tight forest conditions. Throughout, he stresses careful planning, proper hitching methods, and awareness of terrain to reduce accidents and mechanical breakdowns.



Beyond mechanics, the book highlights the importance of woodlot management, selective cutting, and efficient extraction methods to maintain forest productivity. Overall, The Farm Tractor in the Forest serves as both a technical handbook and a snapshot of practical, small-scale forestry practices.

There so many low cost and safe approaches presented in this publication.

The link for a free online version from the Maine government is: https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/publications/general_publications/farm_tractor_in_the_forest.pdf.

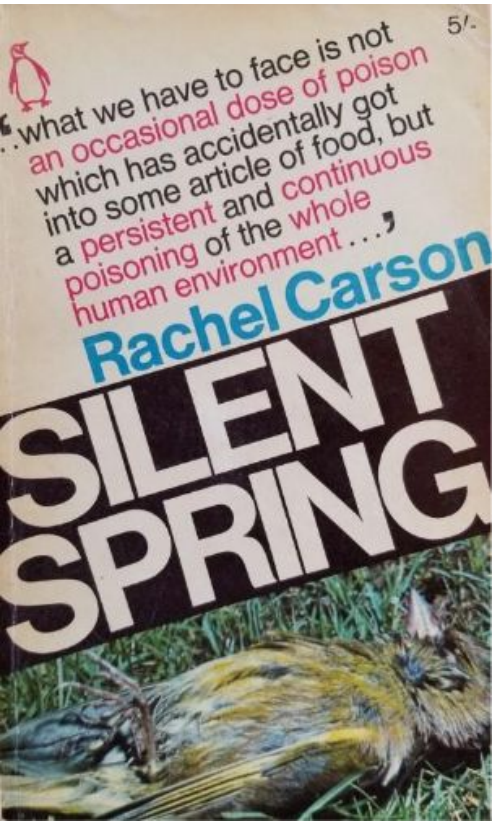


Have fun in your woodlots!

Gerald Guenkel RPF

Retrospective Book Review - Silent Spring

By Pamela & Howard Newman



Book dedicated to Albert Schweitzer, who said
"Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall.
He will end by destroying the earth."

It is now sixty years since the five shilling paperback edition of Silent Spring became available to those of limited means. The hardback edition had been published a couple of years earlier and an excerpt from the book had appeared in The New Yorker magazine. Characteristically, the pesticide industry was up in arms and took out ads that claimed the safety of their products.

Rachel Carson's findings were so well researched and presented in her book that there was an immediate and spontaneous grass-roots reaction that demanded governments take action. And they did – especially with respect to the manufacture and use of DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane).

Interestingly, one of the examples used by Rachel Carson to illustrate the negative effects, and failure result, of spraying DDT was where it had been employed in the attempt to eradicate the European Gypsy Moth (Lymantria dispar dispar) in parts of north-east U.S.A.. The lavae of the moth had caused massive tree defoliation and death.

That example is particularly interesting in the light of Tony Fleischmann's excellent presentation at this year's AGM of the BGWA. Tony spoke on the successful use of aerial spraying to control a major outbreak of the Gypsy Moth (now known as the Spongy Moth) in Mississauga in 2006. Note that lessons had been learned from Silent Spring and the objective of the Mississauga project was to 'control' rather than to 'eradicate' and that DDT was not employed.

Although Silent Spring was successful in focussing attention on the use, and excessive use, of chemicals in insect eradication, Rachel Carson was also endeavouring to enlighten readers and to have them understand that they too are part of this living world. It is our observation that we humans have made little progress in this regard.

The Introduction to Silent Spring was written by Edward Shackleton (son of Ernest Shackleton) in which he expressed this thought:

"But Silent Spring is not merely about poisons: it is about ecology or the relation of plants and animals to their environment and to one another. Ecologists are more and more coming to recognize that for this purpose man is an animal and indeed the most important of all animals and that however artificial his dwelling, he cannot with impunity allow the natural environment of living things from which he has so recently emerged to be destroyed. Fundamentally, therefore, Miss Carson makes a well-reasoned and persuasive case for human beings to learn to appreciate the fact that they are part of the entire living world inhabiting this planet, and that they must understand its conditions of existence and so behave that these conditions are not violated."

In view of climate change and rising temperatures and sea-levels, the world needs a new 'Silent Spring' to change our priorities before it is too late.

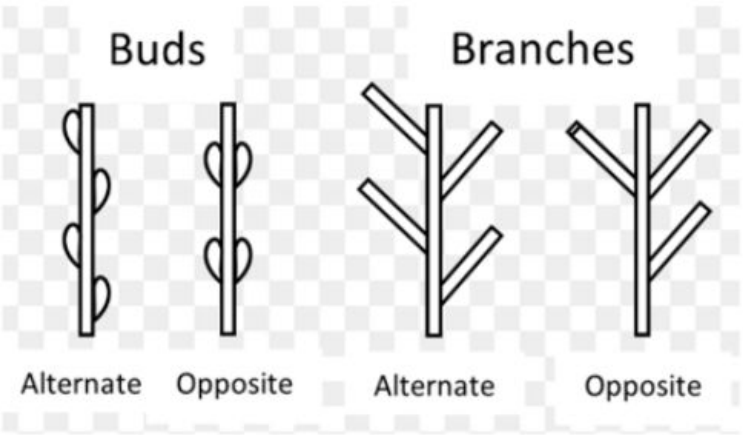
Tree ID Workshop Recap

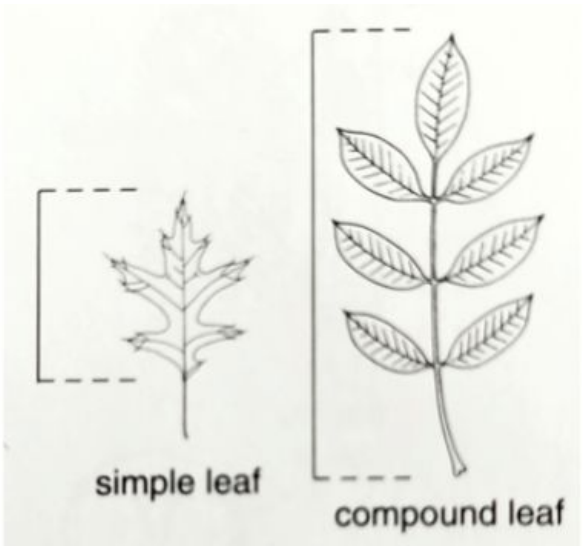
By Susan McGowan, BGWA Director

A winter tree identification walk with Susan McGowan, Donna Lacey, and Mike Fry was planned for Saturday March 7th, but the weather forecast called for heavy rain and heavy fog. Luckily, we were able to rebook for the next day, and an enthusiastic group of people gathered at Massie Hills. Donna was scheduled for Flood Patrol with Saugeen Conservation, Mike Fry had other commitments, but Jill Mandigo, a BGWA member with years of experience in forestry was onboard and Hugh Evans was in the wings for any in depth questions.

This property is owned by Grey Sauble Conservation and is home to the Owen Sound Ski Club. As we gathered we were welcomed by Carl Sadler, who most of you know, has worked for Grey Sauble CA and is one of the dedicated trail groomers with the ski club. He asked us if we could please stay off the "groomed track" leaving plenty of room to walk on the groomer's wheel path. The trail was just beginning to break up and people used snowshoes, boots with ice cleats and some in hiking boots.

Before we headed down the path, we distributed some copies of tree characteristics using Trees in Canada by John Laird Farrarr. We discussed the primary identification characteristic of deciduous trees: Opposite or Alternate branch and bud formation.





Maples and ashes, have opposite formation and our other local forest trees such as, basswood, beech, birch, butternut, cherry, ironwood and poplar have alternate formation. Within each group, twigs can be classified into fine or coarse sizes. Fine twigs hold single leaves such as maple and coarse twigs usually support compound leaves such as ash. We had lots of opportunity to compare maple and ash as we walked along the trail. Ash tree bark develops into a diamond shaped bark scales where maple forms more of a curled and vertical shape scale.

At Massie Hills, the diverse forest makes it possible to compare the identification characteristics of similar species.

The difference between white spruce and balsam fir needles and bark was examined. Later on we talked about the difference between balsam fir needles which do not have a petiole, and hemlock, also a flat soft needle, which has a small petiole. These characteristics are used for primary identification to determine different species from each other. Although white pine was the pine, we talked about the other needle clusters, belonging to Scots, Jack and red pine.

cont'd

Tree ID Workshop Recap (cont'd)

We saw a dead standing butternut and discussed butternut canker which girdles the tree, causing mortality. Butternut is classified as an endangered species.

At the final point in the hike, we were able to examine maple, beech, basswood, yellow birch, white birch, black cherry, ironwood, elm and hemlock. Everyone had interesting stories about their involvement with the forests. Some had their butternut assessed at some point, and others had experience with beech bark disease. The term marcescence was brought up which is the holding on to dead leaves which is the case with some maples, beech, ironwood and oak.

Due to the depth and softness of the snow, we couldn't access all buds, but the handouts were a detailed aid and could be examined later as a reminder to what we saw. As the snow melt and wind picked up in the woods, we headed back to the parking lot to get on with our day.

Trees That Have Touched My Life

By Jennifer Hodge

As a child, pretend play took me out into nature. As a 'naturalist', I would collect samples of interesting things and take notes with my notepad and pencil. I spent much time sketching animals and reading scientific encyclopedias that were much too complex for my age, yet I understood the information in them. I also felt highly drawn to trees and observed these graceful giants with great awe. Different species have left an impression on me throughout the stages of my life and I'd like to invite you to wander and wonder with me down memory lane.

Our family home stood in anaerobic clay. I remember the smell of it during a home renovation and the pooling of standing water and flooding. It was fetid. This also explained the need for the cistern in our main basement and the sump pump that was eventually installed in the new addition. I also remember that my father had great difficulty getting new trees to establish and actually grow in our backyard, and I now understand why. After sapling number two, he finally gave up on a 'red maple', which was most likely a Crimson King. A weeping birch, while incredibly slow, finally did take, though never as robustly as it should have. A common lilac and a 'snowball' grew steadfastly as foundation plantings, and still remain at the house today some 40 years later. But the tree that spoke to me the most was the cherry, likely Prunus pensylvanica, that grew on the boundary line between us and the neighbours. That cherry tolerated our climbing. It withstood heavy winters and wind exposure. Every spring we would wait patiently for the fruit to ripen, knowing the birds would beat us to them and that the bright red drupes we managed to grab were so very sour and disappointing. It didn't stop us thinking, as children, that maybe next year they would be sweet. We were resolved to let the birds have them. That tree stood for a good part of my childhood, but whether in old age or soil compaction around its roots, it eventually deteriorated and died. I felt grief at its loss and the hole it left in my world…

Until I was about 6 years old, my grandparents lived on a farm. My grandfather raised beef and dairy cattle and cropped the rest of the fields. My grandmother grew the typical homestead vegetable garden and common ornamental perennials. I can still see the inside of that house, smell the wood in the stove, the Ivory soap in the 'wash'room, the firewood stacked neatly in the woodshed attached to the back entrance, the earthiness of the root cellar, and the cold sweetness of the water from the pump at the well. Rare and special was a trip to the barn with grandpa and on the pathway to it was an ancient mammoth of an apple tree. Never pruned for purpose, the tree always blossomed profusely, attracted pollinators and offered up a sea of tiny fruits every season. The smell of rotting apples in the autumn was intoxicating, but the threat of bees always kept us moving along the path. What I'd give now to go back to that tree to identify the species, wondering whether it might have been a heritage variety, now lost in time.

When I was growing up, a trip to Owen Sound was a big deal. The drive from my house to visit cousins or go shopping in 'the city' was an hour. When highway travel got monotonous, we would often take country roads across Bruce and Grey counties to the west side of Owen Sound. Country drives with no purpose were also common for our family. As a road superintendent my dad knew them all and yet without the invention of in-car movie players or cell phones, and the fact I got carsick while reading, I paid attention to where we were, the roads we were on, and I got to know the landmarks along the way. Enter *Ulmus americana*, the American elm. In particular, a well known landmark which stood on the corner farm on Grey Road 3 and Grey Road 5. Many of you will remember the tree and know its people. It was graceful and

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stately, a 'lone' elm which waved gently from the field as you drove by. It commanded your attention. I thought it was the most beautiful tree I had ever seen. I admired its vase-like shape, flowing branches, and quiet strength. At that time as a child from the back seat, I did not know what it was, let alone wonder why it stood as a solitary tree. On a family trip to the east coast through the northeastern United States, I remember fields and hills full of elms, graceful ladies in flowing gowns. Eventually I realized that the tree that stood alone back in my home region was the same species. As an adult, I continued to drive past the Lone Elm Farm regularly. I loved the tree, the property, the stone farmhouse, and the horses in the field. I would never have anticipated that one day I would also love a man who would connect me with this family tree and this tree's family. The lone elm played a significant role in my studies in horticulture where it became the key player in a research paper I wrote about a tree that was special to me. This project taught me the history of Dutch Elm Disease and explained why I had never seen the numbers of American Elm throughout my childhood that I experienced on that trip to the East with my parents; the disease just had not reached that far, yet. I learned of the importance of the lone elm and its role in the Elm Recovery Project through the University of Guelph, the same University I was learning about trees and diseases and pests. The beauty of the lone elm was enjoyed for a number of years after that, but the spring it ceased to leaf out, I mourned as part of its family…

My profession as a horticulturist has gifted me opportunities to visit some beautiful and interesting properties, as well as to discover tree species one might not see every day. I have seen large groups of Monarch butterflies roosting in huge *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood) specimens at Lake Huron lakeshore properties. I have been surprised by *Ostrya virginiana* aka Ironwood aka American Hop-Hornbeam, going unnoticed until the appearance of its creamy white, hop-like seed pods gave it away.

My fascination with trees is not only useful in client work, but it helps me see them, appreciate them and feel for them. I've stopped along the roadside to admire a battered, yet surviving, old growth Beech tree, and all I wanted to do was help it, prune it back to health, and preserve it. Locally in a park along the river in Durham stands a glorious *Platanus occidentalis* - American Sycamore - a tree that stops me in my tracks every time to admire it and touch it and hold its dinner plate-sized leaves in my hands and locate its Covid-like seed orbs each autumn. On highway 6 between Durham and Mount Forest, a 159 year old American Basswood, *Tilia americana*, grows against all odds from a boulder and it puts a smile on my face every time I pass it. I've been introduced to a mother of Maples where my arms would reach only a quarter of a way around the trunk, hidden and protected in its location, but shared because I care.

In 2024 my husband and I flew to California to visit his son in San Jose. We both went with very different wish lists. The prime goal for us both, of course, was to visit with family, but the next wish of mine was to see Redwoods, Sequoia sempervirens. While we did not travel to a national park where access to the oldest survivors is monetized, we drove through impressive stands of young healthy forest, and it is there that I hugged a Redwood baby; still a giant among trees.

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Trees That Have Touched My Life (cont'd)

I just finished reading The Overstory by Richard Powers for the second time. I am currently reading The Rising by Katherine Genet. I have read Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard and To Speak for the Trees by Diana Beresford-Krueger. All are very different books, but they all depict the significant roles trees play in humanity.

From the mythical minds of children to the practical and mindful thoughts of adults, trees touch our lives in many ways. They are symbols of strength and growth. Trees remind us that we are all interconnected. For me personally, they represent great beauty and resilience, but also vulnerability, and hope. We need only pause, look up, and remember.

"In some mysterious way woods have never seemed to me to be static things. In physical terms, I move through them; yet in metaphysical ones, they seem to move through me." – John Fowles

Jennifer Hodge is a Horticulturist having graduated with Honours from the program at Guelph University. In addition she completed a course in Arboriculture also through Guelph and is a member of the International Society of Arboriculture and its Ontario Chapter. She operates a professional gardening business with a particular interest in native plants and invasive species, and she shares her passion for tree health and care with her clients through consultation and pruning services. In her spare time she writes, reads, enjoys drawing and spending time in nature with her camera.

Bruce Grey Woodlands Association

Need Chainsaw Safety Training

Safety Awareness Course
March 21, 2026

Chainsaw Cert. Course
Two Days – April 11 / 12, 2026

Women's Only Safety Awareness Course
April 18, 2026

Maintenance and Sharpening Course
1/2 Day – April 25, 2026

REGISTER: president@bgwa.ca
Pre-Registration with partial payment deposit required.
Participants must bring all safety gear and own chainsaw (gas or battery)
Questions? Call Jim 519-820-0933 or jwhite007@sympatico.ca

Meet your BGWA Director - Chris Sanderson

By Chris Sanderson, BGWA member, director

I am proudly born and raised in Grey–Bruce and have always had a deep love for the area. I've been an avid outdoorsman my entire life and enjoy spending as much time outside as possible. In the summer, you'll often find me hiking or mountain biking the fantastic trails throughout Bruce and Grey Counties, kayaking the Saugeen River or Georgian Bay, catching a Hamilton Tiger-Cats game, or simply enjoying a beer in the sun with friends.

I'm also the father of two boys, and since 2020 I have been coaching minor football with the Waterloo Jr. Warriors program.

Professionally, I work for the County of Bruce as the Environmental Services Supervisor. In this role, I oversee the County forestry program, the County Forest Conservation By-law, noxious weeds management, and the Trails Department, along with other environmental initiatives.

I began my career with Bruce County in 2014 in the Trails Department as a Trails Technician and arborist. Since then, I've been fortunate to build a career focused on supporting and caring for the natural landscapes that make this region so special.

I'm proud to be joining the Bruce–Grey Woodlands Association and grateful for the opportunity to help conserve the forests and landscapes of the area I live in and love.

Meet your BGWA Director - Natalie Mechalko

By Natalie Mechalko, BGWA member, director

I grew up in Waterloo Region, but some of my most formative “root” memories were shaped along the shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Camping trips, wandering trails, and exploring the outdoors sparked a curiosity that grew into a career in ecology.

My academic journey began at the University of Waterloo, where a tree identification course really “branched” things out for me. What started as learning to tell a sugar maple from a red maple turned into a passion for forest ecosystems. I went on to complete a Bachelor of Environmental Studies, with a focus on ecosystem conservation and restoration. Through co-op opportunities, I was lucky to gain hands-on experience working in the forests of Bruce County. I also spent some time tree planting in Thunder Bay, an experience that was equal parts muddy and rewarding!

After returning to Grey Bruce, I joined Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, working in the forestry division and contributing to trail development and maintenance. I later moved to Grey County, where I worked on the trails and forestry portfolio for the Grey County Forests. In my current role as Planning Ecologist for Grey County, I review development applications for impacts on natural heritage features such as woodlands and wetlands. Along the way, I began my journey toward becoming a Registered Professional Forester.

Outside of work, I’m passionate about helping others connect with the landscapes around them and continuing to learn from others. I’ve been especially inspired by the knowledgeable and passionate staff at Bruce County and Grey Sauble, whose work has deepened my appreciation for forest ecosystems and the people who care for them. I’m excited to take on this new role as a Director with the Bruce Grey Woodlands Association, and I look forward to learning from the incredible knowledge within this community while continuing to grow my connection to the forests of Grey and Bruce.

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Greenleaves is published by Bruce Grey Woodlands Association (BGWA) and distributed to members to provide information, guidance, instruction, ideas and opinions related to trees, woodland ecosystems, forest management, and recreation in forest settings in or relevant to Bruce and Grey counties.

Bruce Grey Woodlands Association