



Small Scale Solutions for your Farm

Small Woodlot Improvement



Do You Have Problems With:

- Unproductive or overcrowded woodlands.

What Is Small Woodland Improvement?

Small woodlot improvement includes cutting or killing selected trees or undesirable vegetation to encourage the growth of desirable trees/species.

Seeking the advice of a professional forester is also highly recommended. Your state division of forestry or a similar agency may also provide assistance.



Forest understory needs to be managed.

Purposes and Benefits of Small Woodlot Improvement

- Trees usually respond rapidly to management
- Wood can be used as a source of firewood, fence posts or lumber for the home or farm
- Wildlife benefits by providing more open areas and sunlight for small plants
- Wildfire hazards are reduced
- Improves the health and productivity of the woodland
- Provides a source of added income
- Provides energy for farm or home use
- Removes undesired or dead trees
- Enhancing the forest resource can provide additional environmental benefits such as:
 - o Carbon storage
 - o Enhanced wildlife protection
 - o Fence posts
 - o Aesthetic and recreational benefits



Management of your woodlots will depend on your species.

Methods of Small Woodlot Improvement

The following practices may be needed depending on the current conditions of the woodlot and the objectives of the landowner:

Thinning is needed where stands of trees are overstocked. Material removed from thinning is generally too small for sawtimber, but can have value as pulpwood, firewood, fence posts and other specialty uses.

Cull Tree Removal is the practice of cutting down or killing non-saleable trees, including wolf trees, deformed trees, and weed trees for the purpose of providing room for the better quality and more desirable species of crop trees to increase their development in the main stand. This also improves wildlife habitat for certain species.

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Harvest Cutting is made in a stand at or near the end of a selected rotation age and done in such a way as to insure regeneration of a new stand of trees.

Perform a harvest cut after the majority of the trees in the stand have reached the desired harvest size. There are many types of harvest cuts that you could choose from to help your forest naturally regenerate. You should consult with a local forester before having work completed.

Maintenance. A series of progressive improvements may be needed over the life of the tree stand to maintain healthy tree growth. Insects and fire risk should be managed to prevent destruction or loss of the desired tree species.

Associated Costs

This practice is relatively inexpensive to perform. Landowners can usually do the cutting/removal themselves or contract the services.

Costs may include:

- Costs may or may not include hauling wood which can be offset if wood is sold as firewood.
- Energy needs can be supplemented by using excess wood on the farm or home.

Before selling trees, seek advice from a forester or a state forestry agency forester to insure you know the true value of your trees.

The consulting forester/state forestry agency forester will make sure you get paid fair market value for your trees and protect your forest resources by managing post-harvest tree planting to enhance tree regeneration.



Management of sunlight is part of the techniques used by foresters to help you accomplish your goals.



Trees marked for cutting with blue paint.



Foreststand after thinning. A mulcher was used to clear brush to ground level.

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Technical and Financial Assistance

Whether you measure your farm in terms of feet or acres, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can help you develop a Conservation Plan to conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on your land and improve the long-term health of your operation.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply contact your local office to set up an appointment. You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

For More Information

Visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service or visit farmers.gov/service-locator to find your local NRCS office. You can also check with your local USDA Service Center, then make an appointment to determine next steps for your conservation goals.



NRCS partner assisting small scale farmer with developing a customized conservation plan. Photo by Erica Quinlan.

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