

# Out of the Closet

By Kathleen Preece

Page 2 of *Tree Farming for BetterFOR-ESTS* is traditionally reserved for an editorial – some reflections on the season at our doorstep.

But this is not an editorial. It's a confession. It's about coming out of my woodland closet and admitting: that I have 'talked the talk,' but not 'walked the walk' of forestry. I do not have a forest management plan.

For more than a decade I have preached forestry, sustainable woodland management, Tree Farm, and healthy forests to anyone who would read the words or listen to that talk. I attended field trips in Minnesota, and national conventions in Washington, Oregon, Alabama, Montana, Wisconsin, and South Carolina. These ramblings have even included a visit to the Stihl Chainsaw headquarters in Virginia Beach to learn about the tools of good forest management.

Oh, don't get me wrong! I can proudly point out the 16 red pine I salvaged from a road-building job and transplanted to a field that stretches outside my west window. They have been faithfully watered for months – months that have now turned into years. Today they boast over four feet of growth and are producing cones.

Spruce and cedar and white pine seedlings have been discovered in the woods and transplanted to corners and hillsides and valleys to areas of my property that give them more sun or more shade or more water or more – whatever (from my perspective) to encourage their growth. The little prairie to the east of my home has been embellished with big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass and prairie clover – gifts from Dakota friends, and suggestions of Department of Natural Resources prairie gurus.

I have planted and pruned and harvested and dreamed on a daily basis about what these woods and wilds mean to me, and what they could be.

But, as I now admit: I didn't have a plan. That is, until the "auction." The Grand Rapids-based northern public radio station KAXE held an auction last December. It was to serve as a fundraiser for its newly developing sister station KBXE. An item on the auction bill caught my eye: "Forest Stewardship Plan." It was a donation by consulting forester Terry. The item was a good excuse to attend the event for an evening

*Continued on pages 8-9*



Jerry Stensing recently retired following three decades of public service in providing planning and installation, forest health, silviculture, habitat enhancement, forest development, environmental quality, and wetland restorations in northern Minnesota.

Jerry will continue his life's work to care for, enhance and restore nature by establishing Trees Minnesota LLC in 2012.

Trees Minnesota spring and shrub sales begin in January 2012. (218-647-9476)  
[www.TreesMn.com](http://www.TreesMn.com)

A professional more concerned with the next forest than the next paycheck.



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of camaraderie and hors d'oeuvres. By evening's end, I found I had enjoyed both, but something more: I was the successful bidder of that Forest Stewardship Plan.

Terry came and walked my woods with me, listening to my thoughts, asking questions about the future. Now, with a plan in hand, I see more, and I see differently. The fields are more than fields, the forests more than just forests. Even the occasionally fruiting shrubs and should-be-removed homestead apple tree are an integral part of the big scheme of things – part of these woods, fields, and lowlands affectionately referred to as “La Terra,” meaning, “the land.”

Instead of accepting my woodland world and its affiliates as ‘all’ they can be, I learn from my consulting forester that they can be more. As part of my recovery, I have vowed to be a passionate advocate of management plans. Join me on a short walk through a few parts of my woodland:

### Unit Description - Jack Pine: 11.4 acres

“Patches of jack pine are found here, mostly pole-size or saplings, intermixed with grassy openings. Bur oak, red oak, aspen, red pine, black ash are also present with some bur oak and ash large mature trees. Aspen, oaks and ash are more common along the lakeshore, where you also find willow and hazelnut. Juneberry is a common shrub throughout.”

**Stewardship Objective:** “Maintain the forest cover as a buffer along the lakeshore to protect water quality, limit erosion and provide habitat diversity for wildlife. Option to prune several of the oaks and ash to maintain healthy trees.”

**Recommended Management Activities:** “Most of the unit requires no management at this time. It provides a natural buffer along the lakeshore as well as a privacy screen.”

### My plan kindly points out some of my past ignorance when conducting a small harvest:

“We spoke about your jack pine slash piles and disposal options. Scattering slash is the best option to return nutrients to the soil and reduce carbon emissions. Since the slash is already in large piles we also discussed either scattering it or making a number of smaller piles.

“There is some recent porcupine damage in taller jack pines to the east of the west boundary road. They can be pretty destructive in pine stands and to oaks. They often move into conifer stands, especially low ground conifers, in the winter, which is the best time to locate them for elimination. Easiest time to locate porkies is a couple days after a fresh snow during warm weather when you can check for fresh cuttings on the snow and won’t have to scan treetops.”

### And, a ‘did you know,’ for me:

“A note on jack pine management is that mature trees with large crowns or “wolf trees” produce many male flowers that young jack pine budworm caterpillars use to fuel their growth. Management that reduces the number of these trees in the stand will provide better protection against an outbreak of budworm.”

### And then there are my fields

### Unit Description - Fields: 9.4 acres

“These are open or semi-open areas where plantings have included native grasses with some forbs, fruit trees, wildlife shrubs, conifers, white birch and oaks that have either been planted or volunteered. Other volunteers include jack pine, red pine, aspen. Native grasses include big bluestem, Indian grass, little bluestem, switch grass, poverty oats.”

**Stewardship Objective:** “Improve wildlife habitat, aesthetics and fruit production; enhance native species and reduce non-natives.”

**Recommended Management Activities:**



## Are you considering a timber harvest?

MLEP members log more than 95% of the state's annual timber harvest. The Minnesota Forest Resource Management Directory provides a listing of logging business owners who have met MLEP's training and business requirements. Further, we have free landowner information manuals available that will provide you with the resources you need for a successful timber sale experience.



## Minnesota Master Logger Certification

MLEP's Minnesota Master Logger Certification program provides added confidence to customers and the public that the person performing a harvest has the education and experience to do the job correctly. It is an independent, third-party audit of a logging business's harvest, safety and business practices.



For additional information or to receive a free directory and landowner information manual, contact our office or visit us on the web at: [www.mlep.org](http://www.mlep.org)

Minnesota Logger Education Program  
301 West First Street • Suite 510  
Duluth MN 55802-1613  
218-722-5442 • Fax: 218-722-5196  
[www.mlep.org](http://www.mlep.org)

“Fruit trees and almost all wildlife shrubs are healthier and will produce more fruit in full sun conditions. Especially important for fruit trees which will be more vigorous in sunny exposures, better able to fend off insects and diseases and will produce more and better quality fruit. With increased fruit and mast production you’ll also have the benefit of more blossoms, adding to aesthetics.”

**Even my old crabapple tree gets in the plan**

“The larger crabapple trees are badly in need of pruning and in cases like this you may want to just remove the lower limbs that deer are browsing (and maybe not all of them), but certainly the low-on-the-stem ones. Then remove any dead limbs or those that rub other branches or grow inwards towards the stem of the tree. That will be enough of a shock the first year.”

**And, a “Did you know:”**

“Bypass pruners are best – Felco is a good brand. In addition to their pruners they have aluminum handled loppers for larger limbs and a small folding saw that is handy to carry in your back pocket. A Japanese saw – Silky – is the brand – is excellent for pruning and comes with a scabbard.”

**My plan concludes:**

The owner would like to manage her forests in a sustainable manner and enhance wildlife habitat. Conservation and acting as good stewards of the land are important to her as is long term protection of the property and its many values.

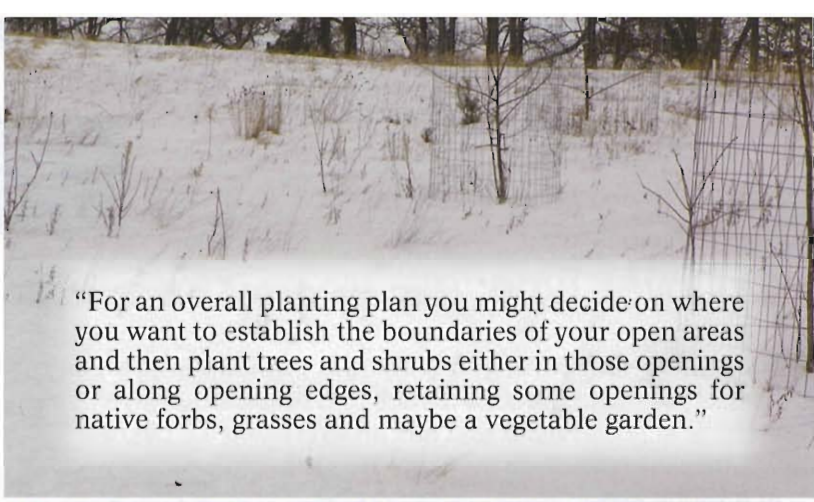
**Hey, this plan is about my land.**

**It gives one a good feeling to say out loud, “these are my woodlands; this is my plan.”**

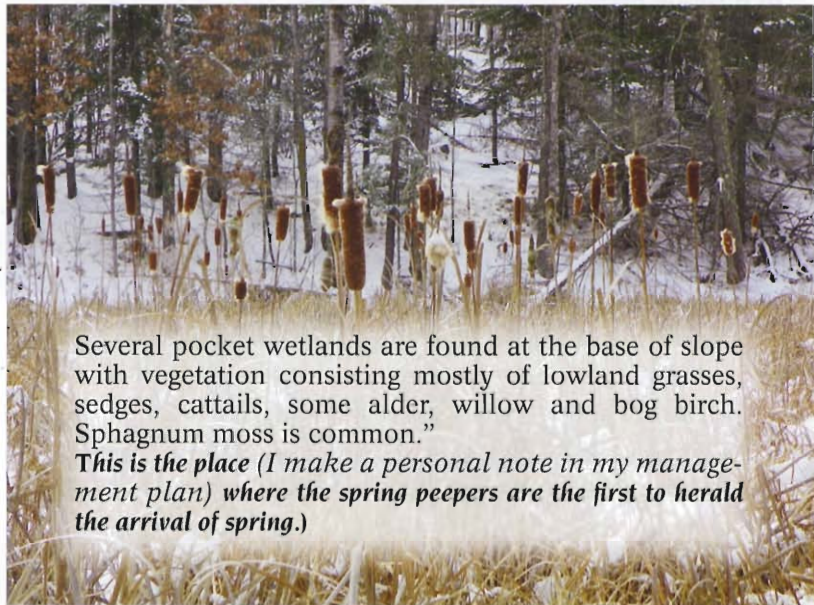
You are receiving a lot of information and ‘talk’ about management plans with this issue of **Tree Farming for BetterFORESTS**. You will find advertisement of a few folks who will write a plan; contact information on where to search for plan writers in your part of the state, a large conference during which nearly every one of your woodland questions can be answered and, on pages 10 and 11, a sample management plan. It was written for a private landowner in east central Minnesota written as part of the “Four Corners Pilot Forestry Project. (The Project got its name from its geographical location at the crossroads of the four northeastern counties of Kanabec, Pine, Isanti, and Chisago and the four cornering townships.)

The project was developed by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (an advisory board to the Governor). Tapping the energy and innovative thinking of one of the Council’s six Landscape Committees (the East Central Landscape Committee), the pilot project works with private landowners, local officials, and agency staff to help increase the amount of land under sustainable forest management.

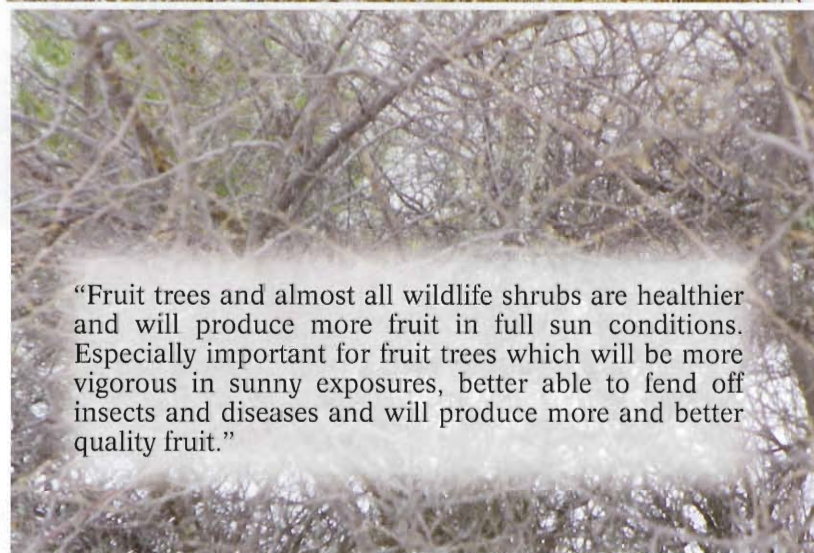
Check page 23 to find a forester. Contact the **Tree Farming for BetterFORESTS** office if you do not have internet service. ■



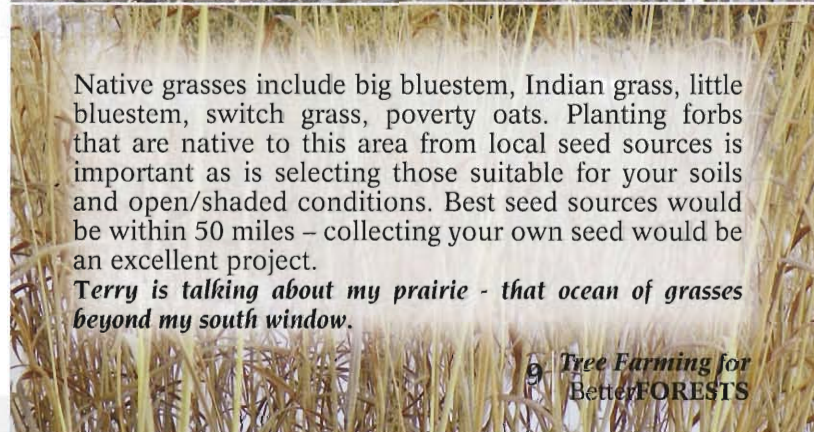
“For an overall planting plan you might decide on where you want to establish the boundaries of your open areas and then plant trees and shrubs either in those openings or along opening edges, retaining some openings for native forbs, grasses and maybe a vegetable garden.”



Several pocket wetlands are found at the base of slope with vegetation consisting mostly of lowland grasses, sedges, cattails, some alder, willow and bog birch. Sphagnum moss is common.”  
**This is the place (I make a personal note in my management plan) where the spring peepers are the first to herald the arrival of spring.)**



“Fruit trees and almost all wildlife shrubs are healthier and will produce more fruit in full sun conditions. Especially important for fruit trees which will be more vigorous in sunny exposures, better able to fend off insects and diseases and will produce more and better quality fruit.”



Native grasses include big bluestem, Indian grass, little bluestem, switch grass, poverty oats. Planting forbs that are native to this area from local seed sources is important as is selecting those suitable for your soils and open/shaded conditions. Best seed sources would be within 50 miles – collecting your own seed would be an excellent project.  
**Terry is talking about my prairie - that ocean of grasses beyond my south window.**