

The Value of a DBH Tape **by Scott Brundage, Consulting Forester**

Most forest landowners do not thin their woods enough in order to reduce the competition thereby enabling the faster growth of their more valuable trees. For example, a veneer quality, large walnut log can be worth \$10.00 a board foot or more. A common or typical honey locust, elm, boxelder, river birch, most hickories and ash bring 6 cents to 8 cents on average per board foot. How can a landowner justify having one of these species crowding out a potentially quality walnut or white oak tree, for example. The best walnut tree I sold brought almost \$10,000.00 on the stump, and I have sold several white oak trees for over \$1,000.00 on the stump. The best honey locust, elm, boxelder, or river birch I have sold brought less than \$20.00 on the stump.

The easiest way to thin/release your best (most valuable trees) is to know how fast they are growing. The easiest/best way to determine growth is to use a Diameter Breast Height (D.B.H.) tape. The cheapest tape I have found is the Stanley 25 ft. tape which also has a diameter tape on the back side of the tape, for which I paid under \$8.00. My Forestry Supplies Catalog has D.B.H. tapes from \$87.95 to \$38.25. Add tax and shipping and those get expensive quickly. I spray a D.B.H. line on my tree at 4 1/2 feet above average ground level and a Tree Number so I can measure exactly the same place each year.

Sometimes I release a good tree (usually a walnut or white oak) by eliminating another walnut or white oak growing nearby, and I then want to know which one is growing the fastest.

A cheap D.B.H. Tape is "money well spent."