



## A Word from the President: Dusty Walter



And so, it begins -- autumn is in the air. The trees are shutting down for the season. Soon, we'll be looking at snowflakes and new calendars that say 2022. It has been said that time flies when you're having fun. I think COVID has also put us in a period where society has lost track of time. Still, all things change over time, and this is true with COVID's impact as well.

This past September, we finally met in person in Ava, Missouri, for a joint meeting between the Missouri Chapter of the Walnut Council and the Missouri Tree Farm. The Walnut Council meeting was well attended. Here are a couple of items of note. First, **Dennis Evans was elected as President-Elect**. Thank you, Dennis, for your willingness to serve again. Second, it was decided that the next meeting of our Chapter would be held in central Missouri. We have some properties to look at and details to be ironed out, but you can look forward to information soon and seeing friends in person at this coming spring meeting.

The day following our business meeting, we met at this year's Tree Farm of the year, 2,943 beautiful acres, owned by Marvin and David Emerson. Good management started about 20 years ago with a Forest Stewardship Plan. We were fortunate with good weather and several stops to view management in their upland oak woods. Tour stops looked at group opening harvests and timber stand improvement (TSI), and we discussed everything from selection of trees to retain to regeneration response. It was a good day and a very nice time of reconnecting with folks in person.

On another note, the National Walnut Council is doing well but also feels the impact of COVID. We are a group with a host of differing backgrounds and seem to do best when we're able to meet in person and discuss the ins-and-outs of what management works on our individual farms. The National group is looking forward to meeting in person this coming summer of 2022. **The meeting is scheduled for July 24-27 at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.** Several of us will be meeting there with the National Board in November and discussing plans for this meeting.

So, as you begin filling in your 2022 calendars, mark the July 24-27 National Walnut Council Annual Meeting, and stay tuned for the dates and location of our Missouri Chapter Walnut Council meeting coming this spring.

P.S. I'll close with this thought – as you get ready for winter woods/plantation management, keep in mind how easy it is to transfer disease from one tree to another. Especially when pruning trees. Remember to sanitize your pruning tools. At a very minimum, I'd recommend doing this between trees, but you might also consider cleaning tools following each cut.

**Here's to a year of healthy growth ahead!**

*Dusty*

# 2021 Missouri Tree Farm Conference



The Missouri Tree Farm Conference attracted Tree Farm members and woodland landowners from Missouri and Kansas. Saturday's field day at the Emerson Brothers Tree Farm gave attendees the opportunity to learn from several forestry experts. Missouri Chapter, Walnut Council members held a chapter business meeting Friday.



MDC Resource Forester, Shane Rice, used this display of tree 'cookies' to illustrate how woodland management, or the lack of management, can dramatically influence growth rates of trees.

Presentations by Hank Stelzer and Max Schmollinger on Friday, September 24th were informative and timely. The Saturday field day was a huge success, due in large part to the efforts of Shane Rice, MDC forester, who represented the Emerson Brothers as their resource forester. Results from years of woodland management work were clearly visible at each of the woodland sites. The visual aids along with Shane Rice's presentations at each tour stop provided valuable technical information.

## About Missouri Chapter News

Missouri Chapter News is distributed to members of the Missouri Chapter, Walnut Council and selected guests. The newsletter is intended to keep members informed about timely events while also distributing general information about the management of fine hardwoods. Members are encouraged to provide feedback about this outreach approach and suggest topics for future issues. Comments and suggestions can be emailed to [Bob Ball](#), Newsletter Editor. During the year we will also distribute "technical articles" on specific topics of interest to woodland landowners. Both the newsletters and technical articles are being archived at our [chapter website](#).

## Missouri Chapter, Walnut Council Activities

### Missouri Tree Farm Conference



Consulting Forester and Missouri Chapter Treasurer, Fred Crouse, managed a field day tour stop on the topic of “Value Growth of Your Trees”.



Dusty Walter, President, Missouri Chapter, Walnut Council and Shane Rice, Resource Forester, Division of Forestry, Missouri Department of Conservation take a break from activities.



Buchanan

Member Fred Moore, (blue shirt) from Pleasant Hill, Missouri, stands next to member, John Buchanan from “Copperhead Ranch and Tree Farm” near Valley Falls, Kansas, listening intently to another conference attendee.

## Managing a Tree Farm - When Your Trees Are Miles Away

**Bob Ball, Member, Missouri Chapter**

Does the term “*absentee landowner*” apply to you? Are your trees growing many miles and maybe hours away from your home? If so, we may have a lot in common. Not since our parents’ generation can many woodland landowners claim they live and work where their trees are growing. “*Baby boomers*” often live away from tree farms they inherited, or land they purchased simply to get away from a routine, urban lifestyle. This distance factor causes several management challenges, but even with this stress the land keeps drawing us back. What we accomplish on our land during those precious hours and days depends largely on planning before turning the ignition key.

We prefer to jump in the truck and head out doing our planning along the way. I suggest, though, deciding on your primary objective for these travels well before loading your vehicle. Consider the best use of your time at the farm, tasks you need to complete, who you need to interact with while there, potential costs, to include the seasons of the year and how the weather can alter your plans. Unless you are making a trip purely for fun and relaxation, a little planning well before you grab the vehicle keys will pay dividends. What is your primary purpose for making each trip? What tasks or activities need to be completed while there? Will you need some help, expertise or professional services to accomplish your tasks? Finally, are you able to afford the planned activities? Planning may not be nearly as exciting as firing up your chainsaw, but pre-planning is essential to operating any successful business when living miles away from the worksite.

Our tree farm is 635 miles from our primary residence in Columbia, Missouri. My wife and I have been making 5-6 trips there each year for thirty years. Without pre-planning we would both have wasted a lot of our valuable time and gas, plus not nearly as much would have been accomplished on the land. Here is an overview of our “pre-planning”. First, do not overlook the need to prepare your body, as well as your mind, for the work ahead. I rely on a series of stretching exercise for my back and shoulders, plus walking to condition myself. We all typically do more walking and lifting than normal during those farm visits, so take some time now to

prepare your muscles for lifting, standing on your feet for many hours, and stepping over objects on possible steep slopes. Begin focusing mentally on what needs to get done during these trips. Because we have a home on our farm, a portion of our planning considers chores to open-up and maintain the house and farm building for each stay as well as basic meal planning and any securing of supplies that may be needed. In our case we take packaged food items, frozen meats, and beverages with us. We also take enough food for our first one or two meals there in case we are not able to shop locally right away.

The core of my work planning is a listing of “*farm tasks*” that I begin drafting in my mind while driving back home from each visit. What tasks had to be delayed due to weather, supplies, lack of tools or equipment or possibly a key person was just unable to keep their appointment. Before those trips get too stale in my mind, I like to transfer my mental notes to a “*task list*” for the next trip. Those task lists also help serve as an important history of the farm that captures seeding and spraying dates, timber harvests, notes about equipment maintenance performed or maybe needed.

As an older man I have learned to schedule down time after about three days of intense physical work to let tired muscles recover. Another approach is changing up physically demanding tasks to focus on another muscle group. For example, if I have been using a pole saw pruning black walnut and white oak trees and my shoulders and neck are sore. I focus on removing lower limbs using a hand saw on smaller trees for a couple days before returning to the high work. If I have been planting or spraying for a few days, it can be a relief to sit in the tractor for a day and bushhog logging trails.

Over the years I have watched absentee landowners become discouraged trying to manage their land because they were not getting enough work done during the limited days in each trip. The distance factor does limit the amount of time we are working on the farm as compared to those who live on or near their tree farms. I realized early the only way major accomplishments would get done as an absentee landowner was by hiring professional contractors. The key is finding people you can trust to perform quality work at a fair price working unsupervised. I refer to myself as a “*cell phone farmer*”. Having a network of trusted contractors helps ensure seasonal work gets done on time. **(Continued on Page 5.)**

Pre-planning is critical because the good contractors have a waiting list of potential project, and you want them working on your land when the work needs to get done. Plus, you may need to borrow operating capital to pay those contractors. I sometimes rely on a line-of-credit for the farm to help cover out-of-pocket expenses for equipment, herbicides, seed, fertilizer, tree seedlings, tree shelters, contracted services, machinery repair costs, fencing supplies and farm fuel. Having access to those operating funds allows me to plan activities more aggressively rather than deciding whether I can afford to plant improved varieties of trees in the spring as an example. If you do not have the funds available when you need to get seasonal work completed, you can lose a year or more in the life of your plantation.

Progress notes scribbled on task lists provide documentation needed to justify farm expenses for tax reporting. I attach receipts from paid invoices to those lists and retain them for at least seven years. I find it helpful going back through those lists by season to make certain I am not overlooking something critical that needs to get done during the coming farm visit. For example, I prefer to mark property lines in the fall when the tree bark is dry, many of the leaves have fallen making sight lines easier to see, and it is just a nice time to be in the woods. I want to grade and over-seed my logging trails for erosion control in the spring months or in the early fall before September 15<sup>th</sup> when there is suitable moisture to germinate the seeds. We try to schedule timber harvests in the fall when the soil conditions are more solid, but because we have a hunting lease, the timing of our harvests must schedule around peak times for deer and turkey hunting.

It can be discouraging having a well-thought out task list focusing on work to be done on the land only to have bad weather ruin those plans. Stay flexible! Use those bad weather days to sharpen chains and service equipment. If the rainfall is not too bad or the temperatures are not too frigid, I often use those poor weather days to basal spray invasive species or killing non-crop trees competing with our quality hardwoods. Those are also good days to walk the land with a camera to document problems you may otherwise not know about such as field or streambank erosion. Gullies forming on logging trails. On some of those days it

may be best to just take the day off and go sight-seeing! Do not fall into the trap of working every day at the farm. Take occasional breaks! Visit with family and friends or get better acquainted with your neighbors who can help watch the farm and buildings during your absence. Take short excursions for shopping, dining and to see places of interest.

I capture significant accomplishments on the land or information learned about the farm in a **“farm business journal”** where I record the working history of our farm operation. This is not a repeat of the farm task list. Instead, I capture only major events like timber harvests, applying lime or fertilizer, conversations with adjoining landowners where I learned something new about our land, specifics on financial assistance contracts like EQIP or CRP, major investments in equipment or maintenance of the land that could impact your capital improvements and depreciation schedules as well as historical facts you may have learned about the property. For example, I once discovered an old spring crudely developed to provide water for a homestead now over-grown with maturing hardwood trees. I made a brief notation about what I saw and where the spring is located.

Plan your visits to your tree farm to ensure you and your family members will not miss seasonal events like spring flowers, autumn colors, or if you enjoy hunting, schedule farm trips around hunting seasons. Remember to take precautions to minimize ticks, chiggers and poison ivy that can take the fun away from being out on your land. Be sure to notify family or friends where you will be working during the day out on the land and check-in periodically. Accidents happen! Absentees do not have as many days on the land, so we must make the most of the time while there! Sometimes we can get a little to frisky and need emergency help. Keep a cell phone handy with local emergency numbers in your “contacts” for quick dialing. I often take a whistle with me just in case to help rescuers find me.

**Planning involves more than scheduling work. It also implies carrying out routine safety activities necessary to ensure you can return home after successfully completing your tasks!**

The **Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival** is the signature annual field day at the MU Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center farm, in New Franklin. Visitors to HARC during the Chestnut Roast Festival have the opportunity to learn about agroforestry with tours of the research plots and demonstration areas, producer and researcher presentations under a big tent, and from specialty perennial crop vendors, conservation and forestry organizations, and other educational booths. The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Missouri Chestnut Roast Festival was held Saturday, Oct. 2. It is always a family friendly event and open to the public.

# MISSOURI CHESTNUT ROAST FESTIVAL



Saturday, October 2nd, 2021  
10am - 3pm

Fred Crouse represented the chapter at the Festival and manned our exhibit. Fred, along with member, Chris Lohmann, estimated the crowd to be approximately 500 people which was significantly below typical years. Several people who came by the chapter exhibit picked up brochures and fact sheets. Fred said, *“Even though the crowd was light I felt it was worth the effort to put our face out there and let people know there still is a Walnut Council”!*

At the **Missouri Tree Farm Conference** a few days earlier, Fred handled a tour stop and talked about the value of trees/logs, mainly walnut. The stop was near a 20 inch DBH (diameter at breast height) black walnut tree of veneer quality. Fred described the value of walnut trees and pointed out defects in nearby trees and how those defects impact the value of a tree or individual logs. There was a 16 inch DBH tree near the stop as well. He used both trees to compare tree values due to diameters, log lengths and clearness. He also covered market demand and how product demand affects the value of trees being harvested. Another fine hardwood, a nice white oak, was also discussed pointing out the value of white oak saw logs, barrel staves and veneer. The importance of managing younger trees to improve their quality and growth rates was the main theme of that tour stop.

## Help Grow Our Membership!

Our nearly 160 Missouri Chapter members take pride in informing and educating woodland landowners, but the leaders of the chapter can not be everywhere all the time.

Your help is requested in growing our membership by reaching out to woodland landowners looking for advice and recommendations to help them manage their woodlands. These folks may be family members, relatives, friends, neighbors or work colleagues . If you can provide us with their contact information by sending an email to:

[mowalnutcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:mowalnutcouncil@gmail.com)

we will follow-up with them. **THANKS!**