

Missouri Chapter News

Walnut Council: Growing Walnut and Other Fine Hardwoods



The Pros and Cons of Having a Commercial Tree Service Thin Your Walnut Plantation

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Selective thinning is second only to pruning in importance for maintaining good tree shape and growth rate. If there are full service tree care companies in the vicinity of your tree farm, using them to accomplish a thinning may make sense. However, marking the trees for thinning should not be delegated to the contractor. The tree farmer should make the selection of trees to be thinned in accordance with his/her stewardship plan and in consultation with forestry professionals.

Considerations:

- Do you want to do the work yourself? Age, health, and available time are considerations.
- Do you have all the right equipment? Buying and maintaining equipment that only gets intermittent use may not be the right solution. Equipment can be rented, but rental cost and your skill in using it must be considerations also.
- Do you need hired labor to assist you? Is hired labor available when you want to get the thinning done? And, when using hired labor, injury liability exposure is a consideration.

I found these advantages and disadvantages to using a contractor to do my thinning:

Disadvantages:

- Cost

Advantages:

- The work is done quickly and efficiently since the contractor has skilled employees and the right equipment.
- The tree farmer doesn't have to do the actual work, but can still decide what they want to keep after thinning (stems, branches, tops, stumps) and the condition of the ground after the trees are removed.
- The tree farmer has no injury liability exposure (the contractor carries their own liability insurance).

Below is a link to a video of a thinning operation I recently carried out using a contractor. I marked the trees to be removed myself. I elected to keep the stems and larger branches cut to 9' lengths for my sawmill or for firewood. I also elected to have the stumps ground and all small branches mulched and hauled off site.

Click on this link to view the video. Read the project summary and continue watching:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3ujMALZ6aY>