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VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE

Events, news, and information promoting the stewardship of Virginia's forest resources.

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jennifer L. Gagnon, Editor

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Urban Forests – They're Not Just for the Big City

By: Eric Wiseman, Virginia Tech

As forest landowners, most of us have a fairly clear vision of what a forest looks like and what benefits it provides. However, it's easy for us to overlook the forest that is directly over our heads on a daily basis – the urban forest. When you hear the term “urban forest,” you probably conjure images of downtown Richmond, bustling with people, traffic, and buildings. But in reality, an urban forest exists in every locality where people congregate. The urban forest in a small town might not be as expansive or intensively managed as the urban forest in a big city. But those trees in the small town are just as important to rural denizens as their brethren in the big city.

When you live in a smaller community surrounded by lush rural forests, it's easy to say “We have plenty of trees”. While that may be true to a certain extent, it's important to keep in mind that getting trees into the town amongst buildings, parking lots, and sidewalks is also important to the comfort, amenity, and sustainability of the town. The reasons for getting trees into built environments are numerous and not unlike those reasons that we cherish forest on the back forty.

Among the most important of these urban forest benefits are keeping our water clean, our air pure, and our homes cool. One of the biggest challenges that any locality faces is dealing with stormwater runoff. As an area develops, impervious surfaces such as asphalt and rooftops displace vegetated land cover. When it rains, water gets channeled off of these impervious surfaces often directly into our streams and rivers. This can be a problem not only in terms of water quantity, but also water quality. When we plant trees where their crowns will overhang impervious surfaces, we can take advantage of the trees' natural ability to intercept rainfall with their canopies and gently channel it down to their root zones, recharging aquifers and cleansing out sediment and pollutants.

Trees are also really good at scrubbing pollutants out of the air. In towns, there are all sorts of activities that kick up dust and emit nasty pollutants like carbon monoxide and ozone, making it hard for folks with asthma or COPD to breathe. Having trees planted around factories, construction sites, and parking lots where these pollutants originate helps keep the air clean and make breathing easier.

And finally, trees keep our towns cool. We all know that under a shade tree is the place to be on a summer day. Just imagine magnifying that effect hundreds of times throughout the community by planting trees. When we do that, we're helping to cut



Urban forests bring nature into the built environment, helping create sustainable and viable communities. Photo by: Eric Wiseman, Virginia Tech.

Urban cont. on page 5

EVENTS CALENDAR			For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the on-line events calendar at http://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu		
Contact	Date	Location	Event	Time	Fee
DCR	April, May & June	Virginia's State Parks	A variety of events and activities For a complete list, visit: www.dcr.virginia.gov/parks .	Varies	Varies
AC	Year-round	State-wide	Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Basic Training www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/chapters.html	Varies	Varies
ACF	April 12 April 17 April 27	Madison Charlottesville Lovingston	Central Virginia Chestnut Restoration Attend one of three information sessions that will cover the how and why of chestnut restoration.	10 - 11 7 - 8 2 - 3	Free
SAV	April 18 & 25	Boyce	Flora of Virginia Attend lab & field session using the Flora of Virginia to learn to recognize plant families & more.	9 - 3	\$30 FOSA members; \$35 others
MM	April 23	Warrenton	Sources of Funding for Land Management & Conservation Join PEC to learn about cost share programs, Forest Stewardship Management Plans, conservation easements, and sources of funding for wildlife habitat management.	6 - 8	\$10*/family
JG	April 25-27	Appomattox	Landowner Weekend Retreats Spend the weekend with fellow forest owners and natural resource professionals. A combination of classroom and field classes will teach new landowners about important aspects of forest management. Hands-on activities will teach tree identification and use of forestry equipment.	All weekend	\$65/person, \$95/couple** or \$35/person, \$50/couple*
PEC	April 26	Boyce	Wild Edible Plant Walk Join PEC for a fascinating foray into wild foods at PEC's Piedmont Memorial Overlook in Fauquier/Clarke County. This walk will be led by local naturalist and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Land Manager Ron Hughes.	1 - 3	\$10
RL	April 30	Barboursville	Sources of Funding for Land Management & Conservation See program description above	6 - 8	\$10*/family
AD	May 9	Culpeper	Progressive Tree Planting Projects for Farms & Open Lands Join Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Forestry to learn handling, proper planting techniques, and alternative methods to manage your trees.	1 - 7	\$10*
DP	May 14	Green Bay	CPS 5th Annual Vegetation Management Workshop Learn about herbicide regulation updates, forest management threats, managing vegetation on utility rights of way, helpful treatments for invasive plants, and farm pond weed solutions.	8 - 4:30	\$25*
SAV	May 29	Boyce	American Chestnut: New Challenges and Efforts Matt Brinckman, with ACF, will provide updates on efforts to restore the American chestnut, including the ambrosia beetle threat. The program ends with a walk in Blandy's chestnut orchard.	1 - 3	\$10 FOSA members; \$12 others
BW	June 14	Lebanon	Bees, Blooms and Bluegrass Festival	9 a.m. - dark	Free
ACF	June 14 Rain date June 21	Roseland	Chestnut Pollinating Season Field Trip Come see volunteers conducting controlled pollinations on large surviving American and backcross chestnuts. A guided tour will review over 40 years of chestnut research conducted here.	10 - 12	Free
JG	June 28-29	Galax	Summer Landowner Weekend Retreat See Spring Weekend Retreat above	All weekend	Same as above
AD	July 30 & Aug. 6	Farmville	Preparing for Generation NEXT Are you prepared to pass the environmental and heirloom values rooted in your forest to the next generation? Join us for a workshop with free legal guidance from professionals in intergenerational land transfer.	12:30 - 7	\$50* for 1 - 2 people; \$25* for each additional

*meals included **meals and lodging included

See Event Contacts on page 4

**You Ain't From Around Here! Exotic invasive of the Quarter:
Wavyleaf Basketgrass (*Oplismenus hirtellus* subsp. *undulatifolius*)**

By: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech

Regular readers of this column know how much I love the doom and gloom aspect of exotic invasive species; leaving readers with a sense of despair and sadness is my goal. This quarter, however, in anticipation of the soon-to-come warm spring days, I have decided to have a lighter and brighter attitude. In that vein, I'm featuring an exotic invasive species against which we have a chance! Wavyleaf basketgrass (WLBG) is a relatively new invader in the Mid-Atlantic, having first been found near a landfill in Maryland in the late 1990s. The actual method of introduction is a mystery – the horticulture industry does not sell WLBG in the US. Speculation is that WLBG seeds somehow ended up in a discarded hanging basket in the landfill. But no one really knows.



Notice the distinctive pleated waves along the blades of wavyleaf basketgrass. Photo by: Kerrie L. Kyde, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.



Wavyleaf basketgrass covers the floor of this intact forest. Photo by: Kerrie L. Kyde, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

WLBG is a low-lying, trailing, perennial grass that spreads along stolons (runners) or by seed. The leaf blades are deep green, 0.5 to 1 inch wide, and 1.5 to 4 inches long. The distinguishing characteristic, for which the species is named, is the undulating ripples across the blades. WLBG blooms from mid-August into November. The small purple flowers appear on spikelets (the flowering unit, consisting of two or more flowers) and have glumes (bracts – a specialized leaf at the base of an inflorescence) with very long awns (bristle-like appendages). (That sentence was for the vocabulary lovers out there). The awns produce a sticky substance which allows the seeds to adhere to unwary passersby.

From a distance, a WLBG infestation may look strikingly similar to an invasion of another forest foe, Japanese stiltgrass (featured in the 2007 Spring Virginia Forest Landowner Update V. 21 No. 2). Upon closer examination, however, they are fairly easy to tell apart. And, although they do come together, more often than not, the two species grow in distinct patches, with clear boundaries between the two. The table at the top of page 4 highlights the key differences among WLBG, Japanese stiltgrass, and two other look-alikes.

WLBG has the same ecological impacts as Japanese stiltgrass. They both form dense carpets of vegetation. They both displace native vegetation, including tree seedlings. And neither is palatable to our native wildlife species. However, WLBG has an additional trick up its sleeve – it colonizes relatively undisturbed mesic forests (in case you don't recall, Japanese stiltgrass at least gets a foothold in disturbed areas, before spreading into undisturbed forests).

According to the Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS, 2014) this species has been found in 9 Virginia counties (Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Greene, Madison, Page, Rockingham and Warren). But the good news is, it's only been found in 9 Virginia counties! And the invasion sizes range from 1 square foot to 80 acres. Which means perhaps this is something we can eradicate.

In an effort to eradicate this species before it becomes well-established throughout Virginia, a WLBG Task Force has been formed. And they are looking for help from the commonwealth's citizens. The first thing you can do to help is to report new sightings of WLBG. If you have a smart phone or tablet, there's a free App mapping available at www.towson.edu/wavyleaf. Once installed, you can record the percent of an area infested, record if you implemented any control measures, use the GPS function on your device to record the exact location of the infestation, and use the camera to submit photos. This reporting system allows the task force to monitor new infestations.

If you don't use a smart phone or tablet, or prefer to hike in the woods without being tempted to answer e-mails or post everything you see on Facebook, then you can report a sighting by phone or e-mail when you return home. Call Kevin Heffernan at 804/786-9112 or e-mail him at kevin.heffernan@dcr.virginia.gov.

Wavyleaf cont. on page 4

Wavyleaf basketgrass	Japanese stiltgrass	Small carpgrass	Deertongue
Blades are wavy	Blades are not wavy	Blades have irregular waves	Blades are not wavy
Short scattered hairs on blade (top and bottom)	Row of silver hairs along or next to midrib	Bristles along blade edge	Hairy sheath
Blades end in elongated, sharp tips; base of blades do not surround stem	Blades end in blunt, gradual points; base of blades do not surround stem	Base of blades surround stem	Base of blades surround stem
Fuzzy/hairy stems	Smooth stems	Smooth stems	Hairy stems

Now, if you find an infestation on your land, you can do even more than just mapping and reporting it. You can kill it. There are two effective options, hand-pulling or herbicide application. Which you use depends on the location and size of the infestation, and the time of year.

Infestations discovered April through June, when WLBG is not yet blooming, can be hand-weeded. Like all the other invasive species we've covered before, you will need to ensure you remove the entire plant, including the stolons. Pieces accidentally left behind will develop into new, unwanted plants. Pulled plants can be hung on a nearby tree to wither away and die. If you find a larger infestation at this time of year, you may want to make life easier and apply an herbicide. Clethodim, which is sold under the brand names of Envoy and Envoy Plus, is a non-residual, grass-selective herbicide which has been shown to effectively control the plants in the spring.

Infestation discovered later in the year, July through October, can be more effectively controlled using a glyphosate-based herbicide, i.e., RoundUp. You should look for a formulation which is aquatic approved, especially if your infestation is near any type of water body. Hand-pulling while the plants are seeding is not recommended.

To prevent new infestations, stay on trails when you are hiking (this applies to dogs as well – sorry), especially during late July through September, when the sticky seeds are out hitchhiking for a ride to a new location. Always check your clothes for seeds as well – preferably before you travel into an uninfested area – you can also look for ticks, making the activity both super-fun and efficient!

Have I finally featured a species which will have a happy ending? Definitely. But whether it's a happy ending for Virginia woodland owners or for the WLBG remains to be seen. So keep your eyes open when you're out and about and try to spot this thing early. I'd much rather you all enjoy the happy ending than an exotic invasive species.

EDDMapS. 2014. Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System. The University of Georgia - Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. Available online at <http://www.eddmaps.org/>; last accessed March 6, 2014.

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EVENT CONTACTS			
Contact	Name/Affiliation	Phone	e-mail/website
DCR	Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation	804/786-1712	www.dcr.virginia.gov
AC	Alycia Crall	434/872-4580	www.virginiamasternaturalist.org
ACF	American Chestnut Foundation - Virginia Chapter	540/364-1922	http://vatacf.org
SAV	State Arboretum of Virginia	540/837-1758 x 224	www.blandy.virginia.edu
MM	Maggi MacQuilliam	434/347-2334 x 24	mmacquilliam@pecva.org
JG	Jennifer Gagnon	540/231-6391	jgagnon@vt.edu
PEC	Piedmont Environmental Council	540/347-2334	www.pecva.org
RL	Rex Linville	540/977-2033	rlinville@pecva.org
AD	Adam Downing	540/948-6881	adowning@vt.edu
DP	Doug Pond	804/241-8118	doug.pond@cpsagu.com
BW	Bill Worrell	276/889-8056	bworrell@vt.edu

down on the urban heat island effect – the elevated temperatures that we experience when there is a build-up of heat-absorbing pavement and roof tiles. When a community gets hot, we have to run air conditioners more, which is not good for our pocketbook or the environment. Planting trees where they'll shade pavement and the west sides of buildings is the best way to help beat the urban heat island. Of course, urban forests provide many benefits beyond what we've discussed here, but these are some of the most important ones.

All of this talk about planting trees around homes and offices might seem a bit daunting. Indeed, you have to make good choices about what trees to plant, where to plant them, and how to plant them or you might end up with more problems than benefits. Fortunately, here in Virginia we have an organization whose mission is to help citizens in all localities plan, plant, and maintain their urban forests. Trees Virginia, also known as the Virginia Urban Forest Council, was formed as a non-profit in the early 1990s, bringing together folks from diverse backgrounds with passion and expertise about trees and urban forests. The 20 member council assists Virginia Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry program with its education and outreach efforts.



Trees Virginia is very excited about its recently redesigned website, <http://treesvirginia.org>. The website is an excellent resource to help people stay informed about Trees Virginia's core program areas – community outreach and community education. Community outreach includes regional workshops that are periodically hosted by Trees Virginia along with their support for local civic groups such as the Tree Stewards. They also support a student intern for the Virginia Big Tree Program and use workshop proceeds to fund scholarships for university and community college students. In the events

section of the website, you can browse the upcoming educational events supported by Trees Virginia and even use their online registration system to sign up for a workshop in your area. Perhaps the best thing about the Trees Virginia website is their collection of education resources. Here you will find timely, practical information about planting and maintaining trees in your community.

The next time you drive down Main Street in your community, take a moment to look around and appreciate the hard-working trees that line your streets and reside in your parks. If you see some places where trees could be put to work, get in touch with your community leaders, roll up your sleeves, and plant a tree. It'll make your community a bit cleaner, greener, and leave a lasting impression for generations to come.

Eric Wiseman is an Associate Professor of Urban Forestry in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation; 540/231-5148; pwiseman@vt.edu.

Happy 100th Birthday!

2014 is the 100-year anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the National Cooperative Extension System. Celebrations are being planned throughout Virginia. Find a celebration near you on the Virginia Cooperative Extension Calendar:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/calendar/index.html>. If you have a story about your experiences with Extension, you can share it here: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/news/centennial-news.html>.

Extension shares its anniversary with a close partner, the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof), which was also established in 1914. At that time, the main goals of the agency were to suppress forest fires and reforest bare lands. And, although these services are still priorities, the Department has greatly expanded the services it offers to the commonwealth. Learn more about the VDof at their website: www.dof.virginia.gov.



These are great excuses to have a piece of cake!

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE



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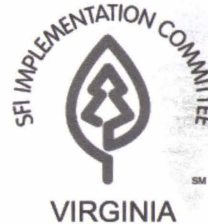
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Useful Resources

- Is it easier for you to learn about managing your woodlands from the comfort of your own home? If so, you may be interested in the Webinar Portal. This site lists forestry-related webinars occurring throughout the US. Visit <http://forestrywebinar.net> to see what webinars are coming up.
- The mission of the Forest History Society is to improve natural resource management and human welfare by bringing a historical context to environmental decision making. View historic photos, watch videos, order publications and more: <http://www.foresthistory.org>.
- Like the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program on Facebook. We have started a monthly trivia contest - on the first of each month, be the first to answer a forestry-related trivia question, and win a free VFLEP logo hat! See the Facebook page for complete rules: www.facebook.com/VFLEP.

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