

# Timber Talk

*Newsletter of the Iowa Woodland Owners Association  
and Iowa Tree Farmers*  
**December 2025**      **Editor: Steve Meyer**



## IWOA FALL FIELD DAY HELD AT MCCUNE WOODLAND NEAR GRINNELL

The IWOA fall field day was held at the woodland of IWOA President Phil McCune near Grinnell on Thursday, October 16, 2025 with 137 people in attendance. Attendees were treated to a variety of educational sessions in the sensational “created forest” that Phil has established over the past 30 years on what was once bare farm ground. Topics covered included Tree Planting, Crop Tree Release, and Oak Health Issues to name a few. A catered lunch and door prize drawing was provided for attendees! As part of the program President McCune was presented with the IWOA Woodland Owner of the year award.



IWOA Board Member Ed Kocal (L) presents President Phil McCune with the IWOA Woodland Owner Of The Year award during the fall field day held on his property near Grinnell.

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IWOA Board Member Craig Semler (center) was honored for his six years on the board. Craig is retiring from the board. Presenting the award is President Phil McCune. Also in the picture is Craig's son Scott who accompanied him to many IWOA functions.



IDNR District Forester Mark Vitosh gave a presentation on Tree planting



Extension Forestry Specialist Billy Beck and IWOA Board Member Ray Lehn gave a presentation on Crop Tree Release



IDNR District Forester Joe Herring gave a presentation on Oak Health issues



State of Iowa District 91 Representative Judd Lawler attended the field day

## PETE AND KATHY TOLLENAERE FROM FAIRFIELD ARE 2025 IOWA TREE FARMERS OF THE YEAR



Pete and Kathy Tollenaere from Fairfield were honored at the 2025 Iowa Tree Farmers Field Day held on their property October 28. Pete and Kathy purchased their 80-acre farm in June of 1996. Pete immediately got to work utilizing the expertise of multiple natural resource professionals to help him make management decisions and do some of the physical management such as tree plantings and timber sales. He soon became an unofficial forester himself by taking the ISU Master Woodland Steward course in 1999 and then again with Kathy some years later. The earliest program plan that could be found for their property was a REAP TSI plan written in 1998 by District Forester Ray Lehn. In the 27 years since that plan was written, they have done various other REAP TSI projects and tree plantings, roughly 30 acres of some of the most gorgeous and well managed CRP prairies you can find, CRP shrub rows, EQIP tree plantings, early successional work, and even a berm.

Pete and Kathy's stewardship goes well beyond their own property. Multiple landowners either got started managing their ground because of Pete or were motivated to do more because of this influence. Pete is also commonly the first volunteer to help his local county conservation crew with prescribed burns, invasive control, and timber stand improvement. Kathy has also volunteered countless hours to the conservation board, serving as a board member for over 20 years! They are not only stewards of their own ground, but they are also true conservationists for their county, state, country, and world.

The Iowa Tree Farm Committee is not the first organization to recognize Pete and Kathy's efforts. The Jefferson SWCD awarded them as the 2004 Woodland Owner of the year. They were recognized by the DNR at the Iowa State Fair in 2017 for the Iowa Conservation Leader Award. Pete and Kathy also frequent many natural resources field days, including the annual Shimek Forestry Field Day, Pollinator Field Days, and Tree Farm and Woodland Owner Field Days.



Top L-R--Ray Lehn (IDNR Forester), Pete Tollenaere (Tree Farmer of the Year Winner), Linus Dyer, Keith Tollenaere  
 Bottom L-R--Kathy Tollenaere (Tree Farmer of the Year Winner), Cheryl Dyer, Kyle Dyer, Cassidy Widner (IDNR Forester)



## IOWA APPROVED FOR FEDERAL FOREST MANAGEMENT FUNDS

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor

Iowa DNR has received a federal grant to fund up to \$3,858,944 in tree plantings & forest management projects as part of the "Iowa Forest Resiliency Partnership Program". These are projects initiated at the county level. The application period for this grant was opened up in September-October. There were 31 counties that applied for a total of \$3,858,944 in federal funds requested, with projects totaling 5,414 acres. The amount requested exceeds the amount that is available. IDNR is currently reviewing the applications and will notify successful counties in mid-December. Grant awards will require approval from the Natural Resources Commission before any public announcement can be made. This is a pass-through grant with the money eventually ending up in the hands of county conservation boards.

The grant and federal funds were part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) designated for a private landowner assistance cost-share program. However, since Iowa already possesses a state cost share program for private landowners (REAP), and also because the IRA increased funding amounts to other existing programs for private landowners (EQIP & CSP), IDNR was able to successfully lobby the USFS to uniquely allow Iowa to create a cost-share program for county conservation board partners, who often struggle to find sufficient funding, time, and resources to enact good forest management. Counties receiving funding will have until May of 2029 to complete their projects.

Iowa Forest Resiliency Partnership is a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Natural resources (IDNR) and County Conservation Boards (CCB's), aimed at enhancing the health and sustainability of Iowa's forests and forest wildlife. This partnership focuses on the development of species and structural diversity in Iowa's forests to build resilience against environmental challenges.

Information about this grant was provided by IDNR District 3 Forester Joe Herring and IDNR staff person Kelsey Fleming who will coordinate the program. Joe herring states: "This is a very unique opportunity for Iowa that is probably one-time deal."

I will provide more information about this grant award in coming issues of *Timber Talk*.

## ITS TIME TO PLAN FOR YOUR SPRING PLANTING

While there may be snow on the ground and freezing temps throughout Iowa, it is a good time to plan your Spring Tree Planting. The DNR's State Forest Nursery catalog is a great place to start! The informative website allows you to view pictures of the trees you are considering and gives the pricing (which is very low cost), size, and current availability of bareroot seedlings. It also links you to more information about the particular species you are interested in. Orders are shipped to you in time for spring planting.

Don't think you'll have a lot of time or space to plant this spring? Consider ordering a Songbird Packet or Wildlife Packet of 20 trees and shrubs. These are suitable for a yard as well as an acreage!

In addition to ordering your planting stock, now is also a great time to construct tree cages indoors or order any tree protection that you may need. Happy planning!  
 Ed Kocal, TWOA Board Member

## IWOA MEMBERS NEED TO ACT!!

IWOA Board of Directors are calling on our membership to take action regarding Forest Reserve legislation by contacting your legislators. For those who are uncertain what to say or write, we have developed the following memo, which can be used as a template or for talking points.

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To the Honorable Representative [insert name]:

I am contacting you in regards to SF633, an act that threatens to change Iowa's Forest Reserve law. I oppose SF 633 for several reasons:

1. It is a property tax increase. Government officials say that property taxes are one of the greatest problems facing ordinary Iowans. Increasing property taxes on woodland owners is unfair. SF633 refers to "fees" to hide the fact it is increasing property taxes. Make no mistake, it is a tax increase.
2. It is complicated and confusing, and not transparent. Our laws should be simple and straightforward. It is messy and complicated.
3. It is unconstitutional under Borden vs Selden, that ruled it is unconstitutional to deny tax credits to non-residents that are given to residents. Most of the arguments made in favor of SF633 were addressed in Borden nearly 60 years ago.
4. It would lead to very strange results depending on where your property is located and where you live.
5. Ultimately this bill could lead to further destruction of Iowa's precious forestry resources which in turn would have decimating effect on our water quality.

In summary, Iowa woodlands are a very valuable resource. In recognition of the value they provide the state, the Forestry Reserve program was created. SF633 threatens that program.

I thank you for your time and consideration and I hope that I will see you voting against this legislation.

Respectfully:  
[Your name]

Email subject line: Iowa forest tax treatment.  
Suggested contacts: Your State representative,

House Ways and Means Chairman Carter Nordmann, Speaker of the House Pat Grassley House Majority Leader Bobby Kauffman

## BACKGROUND

*Note: This following information is for our IWOA members' benefit. Please feel free to share.*

Because SF 633 has already passed the Senate it is considered unfinished business. As such it is likely to be taken up by the House early in the 2026 legislative session. Therefore, it is imperative that we take immediate action.

To contact your legislators, go to Iowa.gov and use the "Find Your Legislator" feature for phone numbers and e-mail addresses. You may snail mail a letter to them at: Honorable Representative [insert name]: State Capitol of Iowa, 1007 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA. 50319. To call the Senate switchboard call 515-281-3371 or the House switchboard at 515-281-3221. Ask to leave a message for your person of interest.

Make no mistake SF 633 is a Tax Increase!

The IWOA board and our members have been working hard to preserve the Forest Reserve in Iowa. It has been around since 1906. There are approximately 36 million acres of land in Iowa, of which approximately 30 million is farmed and 26 million is devoted to crops.

There are approximately 840,000 acres of timber in Iowa enrolled in Forest Reserve. To get the exemption on your land you need to agree to maintain a certain number of trees and not graze the land. You also cannot lease the land for income from hunting, or get other government subsidies like CRP or CSP payments. In other words, you are giving up some freedoms in return for benefiting Iowa.

The benefits of FR for Iowa with the woodlands it preserves include:

1. Water Quality Improvements
2. Carbon Sequestration
3. Recreation and Wildlife Enhancement
4. Quality of Life enhancements (Forest therapy benefits)
5. Economic impact of lumber and forest products.

Senate File SF 633 passed the Iowa Senate in 2025. It has not passed the House but will probably

be brought up in the House early during the 2026 legislative session.

The IWOA Board and legislative committee members have conducted much research on SF 633. Our research concludes that SF 633 is unconstitutional under Borden vs. Selden which stated you cannot tax non-residents at a higher rate than residents. This is a longstanding precedent case.

We are working hard to promote Iowa's woodlands and forests and advocate for their benefit and the State's benefit as well.



## FOREST RESERVE & MORE

From Paul Millice—IWOA Board Member

Update: Early in the last Legislative session SF 633 was introduced, this bill tied Forest Reserve participation to the Homestead Tax credit and said if you held Forest Reserve land in the County in which you resided there would be a \$2 tax or fee assessed. Forest Reserve land in adjoining counties was taxed at \$3 per acre, while non-adjoining county land was assessed an \$8–10 fee by a set formula. Make no mistake this is a property tax increase, contrary to promises made by the majority party in office.

This bill was passed by the Senate and sent to the House late in the Legislative session. For whatever reason the House did not get around to address SF633 and adjourned for the session. This bill will become unfinished business and will most likely be addressed by the House early in the next Legislative session. There are also questions as to if this bill is even constitutional, taxing Iowan's depending on where they reside.

**Communication is the key!** You, me and everyone need to contact our State Representatives as well as our State Senators and let them know that you support the Forest Reserve program and that you object to SF633. Please note that I suggest you also contact your State Senator as there will be additional efforts to attack the Forest Reserve.

We know that the efforts to overturn the Forest Reserve Act are being driven by the Farm lobby. Please note that I love my farmer neighbors and I

love to eat. When I ask Seri how many Iowans are involve in Agriculture, I was told that 1 in 5, 20% of Iowan's are involved in Agriculture.

## TREE DAY ON THE HILL

IWOA will be at the Iowa State Capitol on February 24<sup>th</sup> for Tree Day on the Hill. We will be partnering with Trees Forever and the Iowa Environmental Council for this event.

I don't yet have an agenda, but I am guessing somewhere around late morning to start. This is a great opportunity for folks to meet and talk with our Legislators. Please join us. We can walk you through the process to talk with your Legislators. If you want more info, please email me at [deertreehugger@gmail.com](mailto:deertreehugger@gmail.com). Also, I can make up name tags ahead of time. We will be talking Forest Reserve with our Legislators!

## LOST IN THE WOODS

Now that I have your attention, fasten your seat belt and hang on for dear life! A well-established fact or reality is that Forest Reserve landowners are underrepresented. IWOA has about 500 members and the Iowa Tree Farm group claims 1000 members, this is only a drop in the bucket. What I think we need to do is to build/hire a public relations organization so as to educate the whole Iowa voting population as to the benefits that the Forest Reserve program provides to all Iowan's and that this is a water quality issue and that with the increased tree loss will inevitably lead to compounded water quality issues!

If you have any suggestions/ideas or know of any group that may be a fit for our problem, please email me [deertreehugger@gmail.com](mailto:deertreehugger@gmail.com) or drop me a note to Paul Millice 2254 Black Diamond Rd SW, Iowa City Ia.

At IWOA's Fall Field Day we made an effort to reach out to invite our Legislators. We know their time is limited so we invited them to speak at lunch and as a presenter we can legally provide them with lunch. In all future field days, we will try to continue this effort.

Also, under consideration is a program of mini field days, call them a walk and talk or mentoring sessions. We've also had requests to hold field days on weekends, and this would help with this request. If you are interested in hosting one of these smaller get togethers please reach out to us or if you want to do an IWOA Field Day also speak up.

# OUR VANISHING OAK TREES

Information provided by District 3 Forester Joe Herring

*\*Editor's note: Joe provided the following statistics and information in his Oak populations presentation at our recent IWOA Fall Field Day. I asked him if he would summarize it for publication. We keep hearing about Oak decline, but this is the first concrete data I have seen that gives us some insight into just how serious the problem is and why it's crucial for us to take action now.*

The number of live Bur Oak (Q. macrocarpa), Red Oak (Q. rubra), and White Oak (Q. alba) trees (at least 5-inches d.b.h.) per acre have declined by 18%, 50%, and 49% respectively over the last 35 years (1990-2025). [Data from the US Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis Program]

Specifically for White Oak (Q. alba), in 2024 the annual mortality for white oak was approximately 224,000 trees per year or 1.5% of the total population for that species. [Data from the US Forest Service, Forest Inventory and Analysis Program]

Coincidentally, the 7-year average annual sales of White Oak from the State Forest Nursery are around 50,000 seedlings per year, less than 25% of the mortality rate for that species. Worse yet, not all of these may be getting planted in Iowa, as our nursery does sell some stock out of state.

The 35-year decline in oak trees/acre reflects a long-term successional trend of oaks being replaced by other species in the absence of disturbance, management, and replanting. Our Oaks are growing old, and either being harvested for timber or they are dying off (from a variety of causes such as derechos, tornados, drought, insects, disease, herbicide drift, etc.). The unmanaged understory is typically made up of shade-tolerant native species or invasive non-native species, which succeed into the overstory as the oaks phase out.

To stabilize and reverse this trend, landowners must get aggressive about managing oak stands for regeneration well in advance of harvesting or mortality, which can include using prescribed fire, Forest Stand Improvement practices that remove midstory canopy layers and undesired species, and other practices. In some cases, artificial regeneration (i.e. planting) is necessary because the natural seed source for oaks is already gone or is insufficient. By far, the most impactful action we could take is to reforest or afforest abandoned fields and pastures, marginal row crop land such as Highly Erodible Land, riparian, or floodplain sites, or other idle land with full sunlight. Oaks grow

slowly and need full sun, so open fields that can be planted by machine are typically far more successful than regeneration projects in the interior of existing forests. It's important to note that oak forest management is a complex process, not a single event, and demands significant effort and long-term commitment. Some sites and regions in the state are more conducive to sustaining oak populations than others. Landowners should always consult with a knowledgeable professional Forester for technical and possible financial assistance.

**“An Oak tree is a daily reminder that great things often have small beginnings.”**

Matshona Dhliwayo

## SOLID AS AN OAK

Oaks are my favorite tree species. Many friends and foresters share the same passion for oaks. Oaks are becoming less common because of several factors including maturity, decline and regeneration problems, as we all know.

Oaks are the state tree of Iowa and are symbols of strength, resilience, wisdom and enduring growth. The acorn is a symbol of human potential and humble beginnings. “From little acorns, come mighty oaks”. This is a metaphor for human potential and growth.

A few years ago, at my father’s funeral, a friend paid a compliment to my Dad that I have never forgotten. In fact, it is the comment from the funeral I remember most. She said, “Your Dad was an Oak”. Knowing my Dad I immediately knew what she was saying. He had come from humble roots. He had a strong foundation of principles and core values, and strength and resilience throughout his life through many adversities. “Solid as an oak” is a term that stands for steadfast character to endure adversity and remaining firm throughout the storms of life.

The “Greatest Generation” produced a lot of “Oaks”. We all knew some of them. Let us remember the lessons we can learn from oaks as we prepare for a new year. I have committed to plant more oaks in 2026. I believe we really need more “oaks” both literally and figuratively.

Happy planting!

Tim Meyer Vice-president IWOA

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

By Steve Lekwa

Retired Director for Story County Conservation

A good deal of woodland management takes place during the winter. A tree's structure can be seen. Breakage from summer storms that might need attention is more readily detected. It becomes a bit easier to determine which trees will become the best crop trees in a planted stand, and which should be thinned. It's still not easy to select the best tree to keep when there are several potential crop trees growing where there's room for only one to reach maturity. Insect pests are no longer a factor to attack fresh pruning cuts or us when we're enjoying our woodland work.

Much of the work done in our woodlands involves cutting tools whether it's pruning, thinning, cutting firewood, removing invasive plants, or other forms of TSI (timber stand improvement). Work is easier and safer when tools are kept sharp and in good repair. Sharp tools make cleaner cuts that will heal over more quickly, too. Even hand pruners benefit from a few strokes with a file to smooth out nicks and an occasional drop of oil. A hand-held pruning saw or one with the blade on the end of an extended pole needs a special file that's worth its price when it returns the blade to at least near its original factory sharpness. Using a pole saw with a dull blade can wear out even a young, strong worker before too long, and many of us aren't as young and strong as we might wish.

Chainsaws have come a long way since I first started using them over 60 years ago. They're lighter, more powerful, easier to start, and easier to control. They still require routine maintenance to insure dependable and safe operation. It's no longer necessary push a little pump every so often with a thumb to keep oil flowing to the chain, but we must still remember to refill the chain oil tank every time we stop to refill the gas tank. Forgetting to do so can lead to a damaged chain and bar in a fairly short time. Cleaning the carburetor air filter on a regular basis will help the saw run at top efficiency.

Proper chain tension is needed to keep a saw cutting well. Check every few cuts and stop to retighten a loose chain. A freshly sharpened chain usually gives at least a couple of gas tanks worth of good cutting before it starts requiring more force to feed into the wood. The size of the chips the saw is

cutting gets smaller as the chain dulls. Cutting with a dull chain is much slower and more tiring, and it may not produce much more than sawdust. Dull chains put more wear and strain on the saw as well as the sawyer. A sharp file of the right size in an appropriate file guide allows each tooth to be sharpened at the proper angle and depth while it's still on the saw. Taking a break to sharpen a chain takes only a few minutes and makes cutting faster, more controlled, and easier. The little rounded tooth ahead of each cutting tooth is a depth gauge. It controls the depth each tooth will cut and must be filed with a flat file every so often as the cutting teeth wear down (usually every two or three sharpening's). This requires a different file gauge to do correctly since the proper level of these teeth is measured in hundredths of an inch. Uneven filing of depth gauges (sometimes called raker teeth) leads to more vibration or crooked cutting as some teeth bite more deeply than others. Replacing dull chains with a sharp chain or two during a day's work will accomplish the same thing. Chain changing time is also a good time to clean around the drive sprocket. Clean oily sawdust from the groove in the bar and make sure the oil holes in the base of the bar are not clogged. It's good to turn the bar over before reinstalling it to assure even wear.

Other things that can make a day of work in the woods safer and more productive include personal protective gear like safety glasses, chainsaw chaps, and a helmet with good ear and face protection. Boots with steel reinforced toes can help prevent crushing injuries as well as protect against dangerous chainsaw cuts to feet. A sturdy felling wedge or two driven into an open cut can keep the deepening cut from pinching the bar. A plastic wedge won't damage a saw chain if it accidentally comes into contact with it. It's helpful to have someone pull trimmed limbs out of the way to give the saw operator a clear working area. A friend's saw can help free a saw that's stuck in a cut. Working with a friend nearby makes any day safer and more enjoyable no matter what kind of work is being done. Prepare your tools well and have a safe winter working in the woods!

Steve Lekwa is a Story City native who graduated from ISU in 1971 with a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. He retired after 38 years with Story County Conservation in 2011, but continues to pursue a variety of outdoor activities (among them outdoor writing). He is married to Susan, a retired music teacher. They have two grown children and three grandchildren.

## DISTRICT FORESTER SPOTLIGHT

### MAISON HUBRIG DISTRICT 2 FORESTER

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor



Maison Hubrig has been District 2 Forester since January of this year. District 2 includes Winneshiek, Howard, Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Kossuth, Winnebago, Hancock, Worth, Cerro Gordo, Mitchell, Floyd, Chickasaw and Bremer counties. He previously served as a Forester for the Wildlife Management Institute in the same area for a year and a half. He started that position right out of college in June of 2023 when he graduated from ISU with a degree in Forestry.

Maison grew up between Gilbertville and La Porte City. He was in the Marines for five years right after high school before attending college. While in the Marine Corps he was a Marine Security Guard and traveled the world protecting US embassies. His original intentions after his tour of duty ended was to be a wildland firefighter but ended up going to ISU. He did go to Montana and fought wildfires for one summer while he was in college as a member of a Type 2 initial attack crew. While in college he got married and had a child, which he says "kind of put my wildfire firefighting dreams to rest."

As for his motivation to get into forestry, Maison says: "When I was in the Marines I really enjoyed being out in the field when we did our exercises so I thought if I could be in natural resources or just work outdoors in some capacity. I would have really liked to be a smoke jumper or a hotshot. I didn't really come into this thinking I would be a forester in Iowa."

His special areas of interest is the role of fire in our woodlands, as he states: "We need to get fire back into the woods, particularly if we want to get oak back into our timbers. The reason we're not seeing a lot of oak

regeneration is the lack of fire in our woodlands over the last century. But fire needs to be coupled with TSI and invasives control and tree planting to be effective."

Maison says that the things he most enjoys on the private lands side of being a forester is meeting new people, walking through their woods with them and answering their questions. "On public lands I like to get out there and do the actual work—complete our own projects."

Maison and his wife Sydney have two children, Griffin (3) and Juniper (1).

**Estimates have shown that one day of photosynthetic exchange from a single mature tree provides enough oxygen for up to four people.**

### A LASTING TRIBUTE: PLANTING A SWAMP WHITE OAK IN MEMORY OF RANDY GOERNDT

By Jeremy Cochran, District 7 IDNR Forester

While any day offers an opportunity for planting a tree, the overcast sky, periodic mist, and cool temperatures of this late autumn day created the perfect, peaceful atmosphere for a special ceremony. On November 19, 2025, foresters from across Iowa gathered at Three Mile Lake in Afton, Iowa, joining the Goerndt family to plant a magnificent swamp white oak tree. This beautiful, lasting symbol was dedicated in memory of Randy Goerndt, a man who devoted his career to Iowa's forests.

The chosen location—west of the newly constructed shelter house and fire ring by the Union County Conservation Board at the Mallard Point Campground shoreline—is a spot Randy would have loved. A longtime resident of Afton and a dedicated District Forester with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from 1981 until his retirement in 2020, Randy was known for his passion for planting trees, relaxing by a warm campfire, and immersing himself in the outdoors, especially while hunting Iowa's diverse wildlife. "This is a special place where families may gather to sit around a campfire, one of Dad's favorite things to do," said Jeff Goerndt, Iowa DNR State Forester.

Randy and Deb Goerndt's son, Jeff, offered heartfelt thanks to the gathered crowd before beginning to dig the initial soil. The planting then became a family affair, as he passed the shovel to the next generation: his sons

Collin and Carson, and his daughter McKenna, each taking a turn to place the memorial tree into its new home.

“One of our goals in life should be to find happiness through service to others. Randy did this through his faith, as a forester, and a conservationist,” said Jeremy Cochran, forester from Chariton. “Hopefully, this tree will outlast all of us, provide shade for many people to enjoy, and acorns to feed a wide variety of wildlife.”



Goerndt family. (L to R) McKenna, Stephanie, Jeff, Collin, Carson, Deb

The event was made possible by the generosity of the Iowa Tree Farm Committee, which graciously provided the funds for the swamp white oak, purchased from Ogle's Greenhouse in Albia. The profound respect and love for Randy were evident in the large turnout, which included many members of the Iowa Chapter Society of American Foresters. The tree now stands as a living tribute to a cherished forester, a dedicated outdoorsman, and a beloved member of the community.

## IOWA DEER CLASSIC MARCH 6, 7 & 8

Once again, IWOA will have a booth at the Iowa Deer Classic on March 6, 7 and 8. This is a huge event and a great opportunity to gain memberships and support by showcasing and promoting IWOA and all that we do on behalf of Iowa's forestry resources and woodland owners including proposed changes to the Forest Reserve Act and to raise awareness about the threats to trees and woodlands. If you are interested in helping with the booth for a couple of hours, we can get you a pass to get into the show. Email IWOA board member Paul Millice

at [deertreehugger@gmail.com](mailto:deertreehugger@gmail.com) and he will give you his phone number. Call him when you arrive and he will meet you with a pass so you get into the show for the day.

## WOODLAND CRITTERS

### WOODLAND FLORA

#### STAG BEETLE

(Lucanus placidus)

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor



I was looking through something a while back when I came upon a photo and description of the stag beetle which made me recall a foray into one of my woodlots with my six-year-old grandson who is fascinated by insects. Flipping over pieces of tree bark and rolling logs to see what members of the insect family scurry about is one of his hunting methods and that's how we discovered a stag beetle. These beetles prefer wooded areas, including forests and the edges of fields, where they can find suitable food sources and breeding sites. They are known for their large size and distinctive features, including prominent jaws and orange heads and legs. Stag beetles are often seen on flowers or tree trunks during the night. They are one of the many important insects that play a role in the forest ecosystem by helping to decompose wood and other organic materials. One of their most prominent physical features are their huge pincers which look menacing. While stag beetles can bite, their bites are relatively mild compared to other insects like bees or wasps. Some individuals may experience minor swelling or itching, but there are generally no severe side effects from a stag beetle bite. Stag beetles are a fascinating part of Iowa's insect fauna, contributing to the ecological balance in their habitats. If you're interested in observing them, look for them in wooded areas during the evening hours.

# WOODLAND FLORA

## WOODLAND PHLOX

Phlox divaricata



Phlox divaricata, woodland phlox, the wild blue phlox, or wild sweet william, is a species of flowering plant in the family Polemoniaceae, native to forests and fields in eastern North America. The species name *divaricata* means "with a spreading and straggling habit". It is a semi-evergreen perennial growing 25–50 cm (10–20 in) tall with opposite, unstalked, hairy leaves 2.5–5 cm (1–2 in) in length and ovate-lanceolate in shape. Flowers appear in late spring and early summer. They are pleasantly fragrant and 2–4 cm (3/4–1+1/2 in) in diameter, with five petals fused at the base into a thin tube. The petals are a variety of pastel colors: blue-lavender, light purple, pink, or white. Flowers bloom March to May. It grows in moist, deciduous woods and bluffs.

Woodland phlox is most common in the climax successional stage of a forest community. The flowers produce nectar at the base of the long, narrow corolla tube, and pollen near the end of the corolla tube. Only butterflies, moths, skippers, and long-tongued bees have long enough tongues to drink the nectar.

Phlox is self-incompatible, so it requires cross-pollination to produce seed. Butterflies are the most effective pollinators. As they insert their proboscis into the flower to drink nectar, it contacts the anthers and picks up pollen. As they coil the proboscis before moving to the next flower, most of the pollen falls off, but some remains to be transferred to the stigma of the next flower that they drink nectar from.

Information from Wikipedia

## INVASIVES ALERT

### CLIMATE CHANGE PROMOTES INVASIVES

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor

I hate invasives with a passion, but it seems no matter how much time I spend combatting them, particularly honey suckle, I never get the upper hand on them. This past year for a variety of reasons I didn't get to spend as much time on honey suckle control as I normally do, so I know that next year I'll have to double down on my efforts.

There may be reason why we can't ever get the upper hand. Not surprisingly its climate change. The University of Wisconsin—Madison, Forestry Extension, recently released some information about how climate change is influencing invasive plants. According to the Extension, longer growing seasons enable some invasive plants to extend the window of time when they are growing and native plants are not. Compared to native plants, some non-native plants are better able to get a jump-start on spring leaf-out in response to warm temperatures.

Warmer temperatures associated with climate change allow some invasive plants to expand their range northward. Some invasive plants struggle to survive very cold winters. The higher level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere also acts as a fertilizer to invasive plants, causing more vigorous growth. Many native plants can't take advantage of the extra carbon dioxide as effectively as some invasive plants can.

Droughts decrease the effectiveness of some herbicide treatments. In hot and dry conditions, plants tend to grow a thicker cuticle (waxy coating) on their leaves, and sprayed herbicides evaporate more quickly. Both of these changes make it harder for foliar herbicide treatments to get inside the target plants. I'm left wondering if the drought conditions we have been experiencing in Iowa since 2020 may be the reason why it seems my herbicide treatments do not seem to be as effective on honeysuckle as they used to be?

Events that stress or kill native plants create the opportunity for invasive plants to get a foothold. When trees and understory plants are weakened by prolonged drought, severe floods, wildfires, or pests

and pathogens, they are less competitive against invasive species. And when a cluster of trees dies unexpectedly, opening up a gap in the canopy, invasive plants can rapidly spring up to take advantage of the extra light reaching the ground.

Despite these broad trends, not all invasive plants will benefit equally from climate change, and some will even decline. More research is needed to get a better sense of how the changing climate will affect specific invasive species. Here are a few examples of what scientists expect to happen.

- Japanese barberry benefits from warmer temperatures throughout its range, so it is predicted to expand northward and become more common in its existing range.
- Glossy buckthorn benefits from milder winters but doesn't thrive in droughts and hot summers, so both the northern and southern boundaries of its range are predicted to shift northward.
- One positive is that garlic mustard doesn't thrive in droughts and hot summers, so it is predicted to become less common.

My advice—just keep killing!



## PRESIDENTS COLUMN

### Steve Meyer, IWOA President

First, let me say that I am very humbled and privileged to be chosen by your IWOA Board of Directors to serve as president. And, I also extend my thanks to past-president Phil McCune for his dedication and service to our organization over the past two years as our president. Let us not forget to also thank Craig Semler for his years of service on our board. Craig took on the role of board secretary and did a reliable and fantastic job of recording the details of our meetings. I also wish to state that we could not be served by a more capable and dedicated board of directors. Our talents and capabilities are tremendous and will carry us far.

Now, let me say that we are wasting no time getting down to business on a number of things

Steve Meyer, President  
[gfdchief@netins.net](mailto:gfdchief@netins.net)

Tim Meyer, Vice-President  
[davisdeer@gmail.com](mailto:davisdeer@gmail.com)

Jim White  
[jwwhite050760@gmail.com](mailto:jwwhite050760@gmail.com)

Ed Kocal  
[edkocal@yahoo.com](mailto:edkocal@yahoo.com)

Ray Lehn  
[rayclehn@gmail.com](mailto:rayclehn@gmail.com)

Ruth McAndrews  
[ruthsmca@gmail.com](mailto:ruthsmca@gmail.com)

Paul Millice  
[deertreehugger@gmail.com](mailto:deertreehugger@gmail.com)

Linda Haugen  
[lhaugenmn@gmail.com](mailto:lhaugenmn@gmail.com)

Phil McCune, President  
[arcadiafarm2000@yahoo.com](mailto:arcadiafarm2000@yahoo.com)

**IWOA Support Staff**  
Cathy Wilkie, Membership Secretary  
[CAT\\_Wilkie@yahoo.com](mailto:CAT_Wilkie@yahoo.com)

Sherri Sisson, Treasurer  
[Sherri227th@gmail.com](mailto:Sherri227th@gmail.com)

Steve Meyer—Timber Talk Editor  
[gfdchief@netins.net](mailto:gfdchief@netins.net)

important to our organization and our mission. Our mission, as stated on our website is 'IWOA is committed to advancing the interests of WoodlandOwners, developing public appreciation for their importance and to foster and encourage wise use and management of woodlands and related resources in Iowa.'

We just had a very spirited board meeting where we dealt with a number of issues. We have exciting ongoing and new initiatives that fall under the umbrella of our mission. An urgent thrust are those

actions needed on behalf of squelching the persistent effort to undermine Iowa's Forest Reserve Act. A good share of this newsletter is devoted to information about that so I won't say much more than please write your State Representatives and other officials about this. As you will see, we have drafted a sample statement you can use in any communication you have with officials about this.

IWOA membership is a prominent concern of this board and has been for quite some time. There are 138,000 property owners who have one acre or more of woodlands in Iowa. Only .5% of those woodland owners belong to IWOA. To get a jump start on boosting our membership we have discussed offering 500 free IWOA memberships for one year to new members with the hopes that these people would see the benefits of our organization and will become dues paying members. We plan on distributing free membership applications through people who network with Iowa woodland owners. We are also considering the services of a marketing professional to help us with promoting the IWOA through social media and other channels.

In order to enhance more membership involvement and to better develop the things that we do we are establishing five standing committees: 1) legislation, 2) membership, 3) special events, 4) communications, and 5) scholarship. Any of our members who would be willing to assist on any of these committees is welcome to contact me.

We are also looking for scholarship applications as detailed elsewhere in *Timber Talk* and we will be working on a spring field day.

In closing I'll say that it takes all of us working together and doing our part in order to move forward. I look forward to working with you all and wish everyone a merry Christmas and blessed holiday season.

Steve Meyer—President  
gfdchief@netins.net

## **FINAL WORDS FROM PAST PRESIDENT PHIL MCCUNE**

We announce a new President of IWOA and Steve Meyer is the President. He has been a very active member of the Board for several years and is also known as the Editor in Chief of the IWOA newsletter - **TIMBER TALK**. We thank him for his service and wish him continued success in his expanded duties.

A few words to live by at this time could come from Garrison Keiler of a radio program, *Prairie Companion*:

Well---Be well, do good works and keep in touch.

Thank you for everything you have done to make the past three years full of meaning and easier than might have been.

Phil McCune

Past President of Iowa Woodland Association

**Founded in 1987, the Iowa Woodland Owners Association is a private non-profit organization that welcomes anyone with an interest in woodlands to join our membership ranks. IWOA is committed to advancing the interests of woodland owners, developing public appreciation for their importance, encouraging wise use and management of woodlands and related resources in Iowa, and promoting both conservation of natural resources as well as the practice of sustainable forestry.**

## **IWOA MEETING MINUTES HELD AT AMANA**

**07/10/2025**

The meeting was called to order by President Phil McCune at 10:00 A.M. Other board members present were Tim Meyer, Paul Millice, Steve Meyer, Ray Lehn, Ruth McAndrews, Ed Kocal and Craig Semler. Also in attendance were Tom and Sherri Sisson, and David Solberg.

Minutes from 04/23/2025 meeting - motion by T. Meyer/ 2nd Kocal to approve Carried

Financial report - moved to approve by T. Meyer/ 2nd Kocal Carried

The current CD comes due in a couple of days. Motion by Semler/2nd T. Meyer to add funds from our checking account to the CD (~\$15,500) to bring total to \$20,000. Then invest ½ in a 6- month CD and the other ½ in a 12-month CD at the Charles City bank with the best rates. Motion Carried

Motion by Kocal/2nd S. Meyer to begin the process to change membership billing from January or July to every month. This is a result of a request from our membership secretary. This will require a change in the bylaws.

Motion by T. Meyer/2nd Lehn to take out an insurance policy as proposed by Tom Sisson for liability coverage for the board members and officers at an annual premium cost of around \$1,500 with the likelihood that an umbrella coverage would be added for additional cost. Carried

Motion by McAndrews/ 2nd S. Meyer to continue to pursue 501c status. Carried

McAndrews will help Semler regarding the non-profit status.

Fall Field Day - Phil McCune offered to use his 90-acre property near Grinnell. The first choice would be the last week in September. The second choice would be in the middle of October.

The nominating committee will consist of Millice, S. Sisson and T. Meyer. Terms end for Semler, Kocal and S. Meyer.

Motion by Millice/2nd T. Meyer to allow Kocal to purchase a sound system for \$300 or less. The main purpose would be for use at our field days.

Kocal will order more shirts and caps.

Regarding increasing IWOA membership - T. Meyer and David Solberg presented methods which could improve our odds of increasing membership. T. Meyer and Kocal will check for someone who could promote the IWOA.

Millice was wanting to know if we should continue our presence at the Iowa Deer classic. It was the general consensus to continue but possibly with a slightly different approach.

Forest Reserve - it passed the Iowa Senate a few months ago so it is still "live." We need to target our State Representatives.

T. Meyer reported that Jason Meyer with the white oak initiative will be at Amana August 27.

Meeting adjourned at noon.

Craig Semler, IWOA Secretary

## **IWOA MEETING MINUTES HELD AT GRINNELL                    10/15/2025**

The meeting was called to order by president Phil McCune at 2:50 P.M., following a very successful fall field day at the McCune acreage. Board members in attendance were Tim Meyer, Paul Millice, Ed Kocal, Steve Meyer, Ruth McAndrews, Ray Lehn, Linda Haugen and Craig Semler.

Minutes from 07/10/2025 meeting - motion to approve by T. Meyer/ 2nd S. Meyer Carried

Election results: Ballots are still being tallied, however Ed Kocal, Steve Meyer and Jim White (the only nominees) are the likely elected board members.

Motion by P. Millice to appoint Linda Haugen to replace the open position created by the absence of longtime board member and past president Russ Glime. 2nd by E. Kocal                    Carried

A credit card bill for around \$1600 was received from our membership secretary, primarily for publications and postage. Motion to pay by Millice/ 2nd T. Meyer Carried

Due to the unusually large amount of the bill, treasurer Sherry Sisson will contact membership

secretary Cathy Wilkie to determine the reasons for the unusually high amount.

The IWOA, and in particular, Steve Meyer, received numerous compliments regarding the IWOA newsletter, *Timber Talk*.

A request was received from Mary Ellen Miller to share a table at the upcoming Nature Summit 2025 Nov. 19-20. Our share would be \$250. No motion was made.

Practical Farmers of Iowa is scheduled to have a meeting in Des Moines January 9&10, 2026. It was felt that if we participate, this might be an opportunity to increase our exposure and result in increased membership.

Iowa State Representative Judd Lawler was going to send the IWOA some ideas on how to deal with the bill regarding timber reserve.

Ed Kocal will look into the idea of handing out One Year Free Membership coupons to select individuals.

Today's field day consisted of great discussions, great weather and a great venue. Attendance was reported to be 137.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:40 P.M.

The next IWOA meeting is scheduled for 12/03/2025 at Amana.

Craig Semler, IWOA Secretary

## **JIM WHITE ELECTED TO IWOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Jim White from New Vienna has been elected to the IWOA Board of Directors to take place of Craig Semler who has retired off the board. Jim lives on a 12-acre parcel adjoining 180 acres of woodlands owned by his family. He recently retired from the John Deere Dubuque works after 23.5 years in the Facility/Maintenance Engineering Group. He is a 1982 University of Iowa Engineering graduate and a 2024 graduate of the Iowa Master Woodland Steward Program. He has completed a timber sale and TSI work on 10 acres of timber and is preparing to do the same on another 16 acres. Jim and his wife Connie have three

sons: Robert, Scott and Judd. Jim has attended several IWOA field days and enjoyed meeting different people, and says: "I'm looking forward to learning more about Iowa's woodlands and how to protect them."

## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NEEDED

IWOA is seeking scholarship applications. We will provide one scholarship of \$1,000 to a student enrolled in a Conservation or Forestry program at any Iowa college. These funds will be provided by the IWOA directly to the student. Either the student or their parent(s) must be a member of IWOA. Scholarships applications are due by March 15. A decision on the award will be made by May 1. Applications can be obtained by e-mail from IWOA Directors Ruth McAndrews ([ruthsmca@gmail.com](mailto:ruthsmca@gmail.com)) or Linda Haugen ([lhaugenmn@gmail.com](mailto:lhaugenmn@gmail.com)).

## LINDA HAUGEN APPOINTED TO IWOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Linda Haugen from Lansing has been appointed as a IWOA Director to replace Board Member Russ Glime who recently resigned. Linda and her husband, Dennis own 195 acres of forest in Allamakee County. Their property was first purchased by Linda's parents in 1966. Linda says that even after she grew up and left the Iowa woods, they were frequently back to help her parents with stewardship of the property. Dennis and Linda purchased the property from her parents over 25 years ago, and finally moved permanently to the woods in 2023 when Linda retired. She is a Society of American Foresters (SAF) member.

Linda's career was as a forest pathologist with the USDA Forest Service (USDA FS). She studied Forestry at Iowa State, and then studied some more at Clemson University where her research project was on oak wilt. Linda and Dennis lived in Australia for four years, then

moved to northern California where she could take a job with the USDA FS. After only 1.5 years they transferred to the Twin Cities, where they both worked for the Forest Health program within the "State, Tribal and Private Forestry" branch of the USDA FS (Dennis is a forest entomologist). They spent over 30 years there. She worked extensively on oak wilt and Dutch elm disease. She retired in August of 2023.

Linda and Dennis operate a small nature themed retreat and education center called IOWISOTA on their property near Lansing. They have workshops with different speakers and their facility is also suited for family type retreats and gatherings.

Linda is motivated to serve on the IWOA Board of Directors because "There are things I feel like we need to deal with as a board. I've worked in natural resources in the forest service—caring for the land and serving the people is our motto. My career has been very service oriented. I have been caring for the land and serving the people throughout my career and I don't feel I am done yet. I want to share my perspectives on forest management and connecting people with resources they need to help them. There is work to be done to connect private landowners with resources. That is basically what my career has been and that is what I feel is important. I hope to help landowners connect with the resources they need to help them manage their land."

Linda and Dennis have two children: Nathan and Trisha, both of whom work in camp/retreat related occupations

### Iowa Tree Farmers Officers

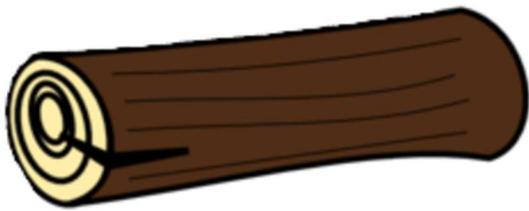
Billy Beck, Chairman  
[wjbeck@iastate.edu](mailto:wjbeck@iastate.edu)

Frances Main, Vice-Chairman  
[francesmain34@gmail.com](mailto:francesmain34@gmail.com)

Lisa Louck, Treasurer  
[l.louck@yahoo.com](mailto:l.louck@yahoo.com)

Sabrina Keiper, Secretary  
[skeiper@amanas.net](mailto:skeiper@amanas.net)

The Iowa Tree farm system is affiliated with the American Tree Farm System and recognizes the efforts and accomplishments of individuals as related to their woodlands. If interested in becoming a Tree Farmer please contact your Iowa DNR District Forester for more information, help with creating a management plan, and filing an application to join.



## WHAT'S THAT TREE WORTH?

By Gretchen Cline  
Consulting Forester in Iowa

In early March of this year, China's General Administration of Customs suspended the processing of U.S. log imports, over concerns that pests like bark beetles and longhorn beetles were coming in. Following a review with corrective measures taken by the U.S., China's customs authority announced it would lift the ban effective November 10, 2025. Although the ban did not seem to have an immediate effect on our prices in Iowa, this lifted ban is a good sign that trade relations in the wood industry are calming, at least for now.

Since late summer, there has been a shutdown on the purchase of stave logs from the major players due to an overstocked inventory that wasn't moving. While stave logs have slowly started selling again, it isn't back to where it was yet. However, the margins on high quality White Oak logs have kept this species a fan favorite with buyers. Black Walnut also retains its king of the hill listing.

Several of the buyers that we work with tell us that the numbers of calls they are receiving from Chinese buyers is higher than normal. This bodes well for hardwood prices going into winter, and they expect demand to remain strong for the foreseeable future.

The following are woods run prices on all sizes and grades of trees standing in the forest. This range in price/board foot can vary greatly depending on the quality of trees being sold. For an accurate assessment of a tree's value, it is best to consult with a professional forester who can properly evaluate its species, quality and board foot volume.

### Species Prices/Board Foot

|              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Black Walnut | \$3.50-\$4.50           |
| White Oak    | \$0.90-\$1.20           |
| Bur Oak      | \$0.60-\$0.80           |
| Red Oak      | \$0.30-\$0.35           |
| Black Oak    | \$0.15-\$0.30           |
| Sugar Maple  | \$0.35-\$0.45           |
| Silver Maple | -\$0.35-\$0.45          |
| Black Cherry | \$0.25-\$0.40           |
| Hickory      | \$0.25-\$0.35           |
| Ash          | \$0.35-\$0.45 (healthy) |
| Basswood     | \$0.15-\$0.25           |

Red Elm \$0.45-\$0.50  
White Elm \$0.20-\$0.40  
Hackberry \$0.15-\$0.25  
Cottonwood \$0.10-\$0.20

## TIMBER TALK CLASSIFIEDS

### INVASIVE TREE REMOVAL SERVICE

I will do removal of Invasive/Unwanted species. I will cut, pile and treat. Contact Luke's Brush Management for an estimate at 641-330-6675, or email: [\(Insured\)](mailto:lucassis@live.com)

**WANTED** in spring 2026: Pruning & shaping of 8 or 10 fruit trees ranging from 1 to 3 years old. Cambridge 515.460.2869  
[kathleenzimmerman22@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenzimmerman22@gmail.com)

IWOA members can place a free classified ad in Timber Talk for tree/timber related items. These want ads will be limited to business card size and must not be for commercial or business purposes. One should email your requested want ad to Steve Meyer 60 days before the publish date. We currently are publishing three times a year. April 1, Aug 1 and Dec 15th. Please note there are no guarantees on this free offer, if there is not space your request may have to wait for the next issue. Send want adds to the IWOA editor at [gfdchief@netins.net](mailto:gfdchief@netins.net). Please be sure to state IWOA WANT ADD in the subject line.

### YOUR IWOA MEMBERSHIP

- MEMBER--woodland owner (voting) \$25
- ASSOCIATE MEMBER--non-woodland owner (nonvoting) \$25
- CONTRIBUTING MEMBER--woodland owner (voting) \$50
- CONTRIBUTING ASSOCIATE MEMBER--non-woodland owner (nonvoting) \$50
- FRIENDS OF IWOA-- (nonvoting) \$100
- IWOA FOREST STEWARD-- (nonvoting) \$250

All memberships are for the calendar year. Please look for the appropriate category to check in your 2024 dues notice. Our website has a Paypal option for those who wish to join electronically. All members wanting a print copy of the newsletter add \$5.

## IWOA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION MEMBERSHIP LEVELS—NOTE CHANGES

### Please check one

- Member, \$25/yr.  
Woodland Owner, Voting
- Associate Member, \$25/yr.  
Non-woodland Owner, Non-Voting
- Contributing Member, \$50/yr.  
Woodland Owner, Voting
- Contributing Associate Member \$50/yr  
Non-Woodland Owner, Non-Voting
- Friends of IWOA \$100.00
- Forest Steward \$250.00 +

**All members wanting a printed copy of the newsletter add \$5.00**

### Member Information:

First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Ph. \_\_\_\_\_  
Business or Cell Ph. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Timber Talk, December 2025  
Iowa Woodland Owners Association  
PO Box 334  
North Liberty, IA 52317-0334  
IWOA Website: [www.iowawoodlandowners.org](http://www.iowawoodlandowners.org)

Timber Talk is published March, June, Sept. and Dec.  
to serve members of the Iowa Woodland Owners Association  
and Iowa Tree Farmer's

Total Forest Acres Owned \_\_\_\_\_

Acres in Forest Reserve \_\_\_\_\_

Which county Forest Reserves located?

County that you vote in? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a Certified Tree Farm? YES--NO

Are you a member of the Iowa Tree Farmers? YES--NO

Are you a member of the National Tree Farmers?  
YES--NO

Have you taken a Master Woodland Manager  
(MWM) course? YES--NO

Year completed MWM course \_\_\_\_\_

Would you prefer to receive our newsletter via e-mail? YES--NO

*Note: we collect this information to better serve our members. We do not share this information with any persons or organizations not affiliated with IWOA.*

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