

Timber Talk

*Newsletter of the Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance
and Iowa Tree Farmers*

September 2026

Editor: Steve Meyer



IWOA FALL FIELD DAY AND ELECTIONS

Thursday, October 27, 2026
State Forest Nursery--Ames

Sponsored by: Iowa Woodland Owner's Alliance, Iowa
DNR Foresters, ISU Extension and Outreach

Mark your calendars--IWOA annual fall field day will be held October 27 in Ames and the State Forest Nursery. A flier with complete information on registration information and an agenda will be mailed to all members within the next couple weeks. Also included with the flyer will be a ballot for the three board of director positions that are up for election. Please take the time to vote and we will see you at the field day!

IN THIS ISSUE

2026 Tree Farmer of the Year	P. 2
Mini Field Day	P. 2
Looking Forward to Fall Woodland Work	P. 3
The Imperfect Forest	P. 4
What's Happening to White Oak?	P. 5
Pesticides Shatter Leaves	P. 6
Weather Effects on Trees	P. 8
Herbicide Warnings	P. 10
District Forester Spotlight	P. 12
Woodland Critters	
Yellow Breasted Chat	P. 13
Woodland Flora: Wild Grape	P. 13
Book Review—The Wondering Woodsman	P. 14
Written in the Rings	P. 11
Presidents Column	P. 15
IWOA Meeting Minutes 5/19/2026	P. 16
Through Your Lense	P. 18
What's That Tree Worth?	P. 19
At the Woodpile	P. 19
Forest Reserve	P. 20
Freedom To Flourish	P. 20
Scott James—USFWS Biologist	P. 21
Classifieds	P. 22

48TH ANNUAL SHIMEK FORESTRY FIELD DAY--OCTOBER 6

The 48th Annual Shimek Forestry Field Day will be held at Wilson Lake Park, 2195 220th Street, Donnellson, IA 52625 on Tuesday October 6 beginning at 8:30 AM.

Agenda includes:

9:25-11:50--Concurrent Sessions on Forest Health

- Oak Wilt, Hypoxylon Canker & Tree Disease Basics
- Pesticides in Woodland Ecosystems
- Ecological Succession: Forest Health Concerns

12:00-1:00—Lunch with Mini Sessions and Door Prizes

- USDA Updates
- NRCS—Where Do I Start
- IWOA Updates

1:15-2:30-- Concurrent Sessions

- Pond Management
- Prairie Conservation Basics

Presenters include Ed Zaworski, ISU Plant and Insect Diagnostician Clinic; Dr. Chelsea Harbach, ISU Plant and Insect Diagnostician Clinic; John Byrd, Area Forester, IDNR, Shimek Forest; Lisa Louck, IDNR District Forester; Robert Petrezelka, Forester, Geode Forestry; Gretchen Cline, Forester, Geode Forestry; LeAnn Winters, NRCS District, Lee County Conservationist, Lee County; Ray Lehn, Retired IDNR District Forester; Chad Dolan, IDNR Fisheries Management Biologist; Avery Jacobs, Conservation Technician, LCCB

Registration is \$20 and includes lunch. To register call Lee County Extension at 319-835-5116 or e-mail ellison1@iastate.edu by September 28th, 2026.

IWOA MINI FIELD DAY SEPTEMBER 19

By Paul Millice, IWOA Board Member

The board has been tossing around the idea of having mini field days, so here is our first cut.

I have volunteered to host the first one of these and since we have not been here since 2013 it is about time. The main reason is that parking is limited and we will shuttle attendees from the DNR's main parking lot at Red Bird Wildlife area.

This will be a free field day with doughnuts from Golden Delight Amish bakery and coffee.

This will be a three-hour session, and we hope to talk about: Natural Oak regeneration, Invasives, Forest health to include oak tatters, tree protection, nuisance trapping, pruning and shaping and the importance of the Forest Reserve Act, Water Quality, Cancer rates and the upcoming elections, as well as anything else that comes up.

This will be limited to 20-25 people. Session will be 0900-noon and if necessary, we may try to do a session at 1300. To request a spot, email me at deertreehugger@gmail.com or if you don't have email try to call me at three one nine 331-1238. Please ensure that you have a confirmed reservation prior to attending. The date will be Saturday September 19th and the location will be 2254 Black Diamond Road SW, Iowa City, 52240.



WAYNE WANGSNESS FROM DECORAH IS 2026 IOWA OUTSTANDING TREE FARMER OF THE YEAR

Wayne Wangsness bought his first farm near Decorah in 1964 and has been adding to it ever since, now stewarding 72 acres of woodland, 55 of which are enrolled in the Tree Farm program, on a farm of more than 400 acres. Wayne's current management plan was written in 2021, but his commitment to the land goes back decades: the oldest plan on file for his property dates to 1981.



Wayne & Cheryl Wangsness are presented with the Iowa Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award at the September 9 Tree Farmer Field Day on their farm. (L-R) Tree Farmer Larry Wiley, District Forester Greg Heidebrink,, Wayne & Cheryl Wangsness, Dr. Billy Beck, Tree Farmer's Chairman. Steve Meyer Photo.

Wayne does almost all of the crop tree release on his farm himself, work his forester says he does so well that he rarely needs to be asked twice. Over the last 10 years alone, he has completed more than 43 acres of timber stand improvement. His forest history includes clearcut and selective harvests dating back decades, direct seeding of 29 acres in 1998, and 7.4 acres of clearcut replanting in 2021. He protects all of his forest ground from grazing, and his goals for the property - lumber, recreation, and habitat - reflect a true multiple-use approach to land stewardship.

Wayne's stewardship extends well beyond his own fence lines. A majority of his crop ground is farmed organically, and the property includes a farm pond and 50-60 acres of prairie grasses and pollinator habitat alongside the working woodland. His forester notes that Wayne has personally introduced him to other landowners and encouraged his own son to put a forest management plan in place, spreading good forestry practice throughout his community.

"He is innovative, passionate, and - as the Tree Farm sign says - always watching out for our woods, water, wildlife, and recreational opportunities," wrote Greg Heidebrink, Wayne's forester, in his nomination. The Iowa Tree Farm Committee presented Wayne with the Iowa Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award at his farm in Winneshiek County on September 9 during the Tree Farmer annual field day.

LOOKING FORWARD TO FALL WOODLAND WORK

By Steve Lekwa

Retired Director for Story County Conservation

Summer's heat and humidity is finally past. A frost or two should have reduced mosquitoes to a tolerable level. It's a time when woodland owners look forward to getting back into the woods, and there's plenty that can be done!

There's still time for new trees to get established in early fall. Consider planting more trees and possibly increase the diversity of the timber stand. Mature oak-hickory uplands don't tend to come back as oak-hickory if shade tolerant maples and basswoods have increased under the old trees. Oaks and hickories need full sun to prosper and can't compete in the shade of their parent trees like maples do. Recent openings caused by storms, oak die offs, and dead ash stands are a good spot to add some oak and hickory again. If not this fall, then at least order some tree stock for planting next spring!

Any trees that are planted will need protection from winter browsing deer. Even if deer don't eat the young saplings, bucks seem to love nothing more than thrashing new young trees as they rub the "velvet" off of their new antlers. Wire cages or tree tubes may protect the investment in new trees depending on their size. Trees near streams or ponds may need protection from beavers, too. A loose wrap of chicken wire at least 4 feet high can reduce beaver damage. Be sure to loosen the wrap every year or two to keep it from growing into the tree as the trunk expands. Even if beavers aren't in the area, fall is the time that young beaver couples wander around to find new territories for themselves. You may not know that new beavers have arrived until they start felling trees for food and construction material for their first dam. They seem to leave walnuts alone, but love oaks, red elms, cottonwoods, and more. They may girdle and kill even large mature trees as they eat the tasty inner bark.

Fall is also a good time for invasive species management. The leaves of Asian honeysuckle and buck thorn stay green even after many forest trees have lost their leaves. It's an opportunity to attack them with foliar spray. Caution must be exercised, however, if there are still living hardwoods above

them. Oaks are particularly sensitive to some herbicides. It might be better to cut invasives under old over story trees and treat the cut stumps with a product like Tordon RTU or full-strength Roundup. Don't use cut stump treatment to the point of runoff. Chemicals in RTU can remain active in the soil for a long time. Only a little chemical is needed to prevent resprouting of the stump next spring. Make sure the ring of cambium just under the bark is treated. The product must be used as soon after the cut as possible. Honey suckle is shallow rooted and smaller plants can be hand-pulled if the soil is damp and soft.

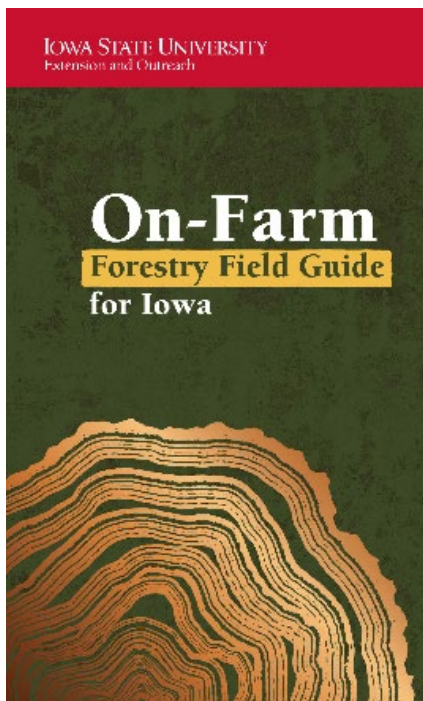
Garlic mustard is an herbaceous annual that is increasing in forest under stories across Iowa. It can choke out native flowers, sedges, and even small trees. Garlic mustard dies and sheds its seeds in the summer. The seeds sprout in the fall, and tiny seedlings stay green all winter. They begin growth in the early spring and flower by late spring. Small plants can be killed or at least significantly thinned through the use of winter or early spring prescribed fire. Seed can remain viable in the soil for several years, so preventing seed set is important. The plants are shallow rooted and easily pulled by hand in the spring. It's important to remove the pulled plants from the forest since flowers on pulled plants might still make seeds. The plants are vulnerable to foliar broad leaf herbicide sprays before they flower. The leaves are edible as a faintly garlic flavored green that some folks enjoy.

A relatively new way to control unwanted invasive plants in forest stands is by grazing with goats. Goats love to eat broad leafed plants, and will defoliate honeysuckle, buckthorn, multiflora rose, and garlic mustard. The best time to use goats or even a brush-hog mower is late spring and summer. The plants have used stored root energy to grow new leaves and extend branches. Cutting or grazing them off at that time means that energy was wasted, and more will be required to grow new leaf tissue. They will not have time to gather as much root reserve energy to be so vigorous next spring. It may take several years of defoliation to weaken root reserves of undesirable plants to the point that they can no longer thrive. The goats might eat good trees, too, but most of them wouldn't have a chance to grow anyway unless the invasives are controlled.

Removal of dead and dying trees may be important as a source of firewood or to prevent the

spread of diseases. Remember to leave a few dead trees and brush piles around, though. Many forest birds and animals depend on them as a source of food, nest, and den sites. Summer storm damage is easier to see after leaf drop, and tree health can be improved by carefully pruning out damaged branches.

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.



ISU EXTENSION RELEASES NEW FORESTRY FIELD GUIDE

This newly released 137-page pocket-sized reference guide from ISU Extension is designed to help farmers and landowners confidently establish and maintain effective tree and woodland resources on farms—enhancing their agricultural enterprises as well as the ecology of working agricultural landscapes. The guide is jam packed with information and a handy, practical guide to have handy for anything you’re doing in the woods. Every woodland owner needs one of these handy!

The guide can be downloaded from the ISU Extension website or it can be ordered for free from the Iowa Learning Farms by calling 515-294-5429.

THE IMPERFECT FOREST

By Tim Meyer, Vice-president IWOA

“The Imperfect Forest.” The definition of an “imperfect forest” according to AI, is “one that is unevenly aged, damaged and unmanageable rather than a pristine monoculture timber farm.” Recently going through our Iowa County 15-acre woodland, it struck me that it is really the definition of our forest. It is damaged, somewhat unmanaged, uneven aged and “imperfect” in many ways. We have done some minimal planting, TSI, and other management over the years. I took my neighbor through the timber on my mowed trails the other day to show him a few places we could pile some shrubs he is tearing out. I was surprised to hear him say “this is really cool back here.” He is right, but sometimes our forest management “perfect” view of our land blocks us from seeing the beauty of the “imperfect” woodlands. Hickory, elms, hackberry, cherry, maples and other species may not be perfect in our ideal forest management plans but they still provide lots of protection and shade. The habitat they provide slows runoff and does many positive things in our Price Creek watershed. It also creates great bird and wildlife habitat. Sometimes it takes a “reboot” to our thinking from a friend to look at something differently. We spend a lot of time in our “imperfect” woodland and it certainly provides us an easy escape from the busy, bustling world. We are out there a lot, checking on tree plantings, mowing trails, cutting down and splitting wood, picking mushrooms, and just relaxing. Thanks to my neighbor for reminding me that timbers don’t have to be “perfect” to be very valuable. It’s not all about timber production 60-80 years from now. Aesthetics and relaxation are something we enjoy almost every day. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”.

“Gold is a luxury. Trees are necessities. Man can live and thrive without gold, but we cannot survive without trees.”

Paul Bamikole

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING TO WHITE OAK IN IOWA?

By Tivon Feeley

Iowa DNR Forest Health Program Leader

For several years, the Iowa DNR has been investigating increasing white oak decline and mortality across Iowa. Many of the affected woodlands have similar symptoms: thinning crowns, dying branches, reduced tree vigor, and mature white oaks dying suddenly in late summer.

From 2022 through 2025, the Iowa DNR Forest Health Program monitored bark and ambrosia beetles in oak-hickory forests across Iowa to compare sites experiencing white oak decline with sites where white oak decline was not occurring. All of the study areas were typical woodlands with white oak as an important part of the overstory. Sites were classified using repeated field observations, crown condition, and mortality information.

The selected white oak decline sites had 15% or more white oak mortality, with mortality exceeding 40% at some locations. Sites without white oak decline had fewer visible symptoms and much lower mortality rates, an average of 8.3%. The study also coincided with several years of prolonged drought, which placed considerable stress on white oaks across Iowa.

We also surveyed for other insects and diseases that commonly affect white oaks: anthracnose, bur oak blight, various leaf diseases, root rots, cankers, two-lined chestnut borer, oak wilt, and several common leaf and twig feeding insects. These problems were generally found at similar levels in both declining and non-declining study sites.

The pattern we found was striking. Sites experiencing the greatest white oak decline and mortality consistently had much higher numbers and a wider variety of bark and ambrosia beetle populations. Trees examined at declining sites also had far more beetle galleries beneath the bark. In other words, where white oak mortality was greatest, beetle activity was also greatest.

Several native beetles were especially associated with declining white oaks. These included oak bark beetles, which are known vectors of the oak wilt fungus. However, oak wilt does not appear to explain the widespread white oak mortality we

observed. A separate oak wilt investigation was conducted at the monitoring sites, and only one site had a significant level of oak wilt. This helped separate the widespread decline we are seeing from mortality caused primarily by oak wilt.

The study also documented Columbian timber beetles and several other bark and ambrosia beetles that have not been well documented in Iowa. Their occurrence and potential role in stressed Iowa hardwood forests deserve additional study.

What We Think Is Happening

The prolonged drought weakened white oaks and created ideal conditions for bark and ambrosia beetle populations to increase dramatically. Normally, these insects take advantage of trees that are already stressed. However, when beetle populations become very high, a weakened tree can be attacked by large numbers of beetles over a short period of time. The repeated tunneling and colonization disrupted the tree's ability to move water and nutrients. We believe the combination of severe drought stress and unusually high beetle pressure may help explain why white oaks have declined and died much more rapidly.

The study will continue so we can get more information during non-drought years. This is especially important because we want to see whether bark beetle populations decline as soil moisture and tree vigor improve.

What Woodland Owners Can Do

For now, management should focus on maintaining tree vigor and reducing additional stress. Avoid unnecessary injury to remaining oaks, minimize soil and root disturbance, and monitor woodlands for crown thinning, branch dieback, bark beetle galleries, and increasing mortality. Where possible, maintaining a diverse mix of tree species and age classes will also make woodlands more resilient to future drought, insects, and disease.

Tivon Feeley

Iowa DNR Forest Health Program Leader

515-669-1402

tivon.feeley@dnr.iowa.gov

PESTICIDES ‘SHATTER’ LEAVES OF IOWA’S STATE TREE

A conservationist’s 20-year quest to address pesticide damage in his oak savanna

By Tom Foley

As published in the Iowa Capital Dispatch (www.iowacapitaldispatch.com) June 19, 2026



Oak tatters from herbicide contamination in 2026 at Prairie Oaks Reservation in LeClaire, Iowa. (Photo courtesy of Tony Singh)

In 1996, Tony Singh began rewilding a plot of land in LeClaire, hoping to restore its oak savanna, native prairie, woodlands and wetlands.

Less than five years later, he noticed the leaves on his oak trees were in tatters.

“When the leaf is coming out, if it is natural, it’s a beautiful thing,” Singh said. “But then they start spraying this pre-emergent herbicide, and the leaves get completely shattered.”

Over the last 20 years, Singh has been documenting the phenomenon and trying to raise awareness about it. But his 50-acre reserve is surrounded by an industrial agriculture system that is economically entwined with the land he seeks to restore.

“Acetochlor has been correlated strongly with oak tatters, where the tissue just is missing from the oak leaf, and you just see the veins, or with dicamba, you’ll see cupping and curling,” said Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forest Health Program Leader Tivon Feeley.



Tony Singh shows off pre-emergent herbicide damage to an oak tree in 2026 on his reservation in LeClaire, Iowa. (Photo courtesy of Tony Singh)

Acetochlor and dicamba are two widely used herbicides. Acetochlor is typically applied to target early grasses and weeds on row crop plots. Dicamba is used to target broadleaf weeds.

Singh has noticed both effects in the oaks on his plot of land. Oaks are Iowa’s state tree, but there are 12 different species of oak native to Iowa’s forests. These oaks fall into the broader white oak and red oak families, but according to Feeley, “all oak species are sensitive to any herbicide injury.”

Most oaks are especially vulnerable to herbicides during the spraying season, as it correlates with their emergence in spring. Breaking out of dormancy and pushing out their first set of leaves requires some of the most energy in a tree’s lifecycle.

Feeley said a single year of exposure to herbicides is unlikely to cause long-term damage. “The greater concern is if we see repeated injury year after year,” he said.

Singh said affected trees respond by pushing out a second set of leaves to account for the herbicide damage, but they’re not designed to repeatedly push out a second flush each year they try to regrow in the spring. Instead, they weaken and die.

The ones that die are often many of his reserve’s old-growth trees. Singh has lost over 50 bur oaks, many of them more than 200 years old.

The oak savannas Singh works to restore were once common through north America. The lands contained expanses of prairie grasses and native flowers with open-grown oak trees dotting the horizon. These understory and open canopy areas were maintained by low-intensity wildfires every one-to-10 years.

In the Midwest, only 30,000 acres of these lands remain today — between 0.02-0.06% of their original land coverage.

Singh said the weather plays a role.

“It doesn’t have to be adjacent to you. (Herbicide) volatilizes, so if it’s a warmer day, you spray it, it warms up, it evaporates, and it can even be in rainwater,” Singh said. “It could be sprayed a mile, mile and a half away.”

Dicamba is especially prone to volatilization, a process where the chemical dries and is converted into a gas. The gas is then swept up by the atmosphere and can drift for miles, impacting vegetation across the state.

As both Feeley and Singh noted, volatilization also makes herbicide drift cases difficult to enforce.

Repeated complaints leave issues unresolved

Singh has filed repeated complaints through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. The investigation process involves IDALS agents taking plant samples for analysis. In his experience, responses can take up to three or four months.

The result is often the same, he said — the samples contain a different mix of chemicals depending on the year, but often they include acetochlor, and in recent years, more of them show traces of dicamba.

In 2025, IDALS conducted 257 misuse investigations, only 25 of which were non-agriculture related complaints. According to the department’s website, investigation reports typically take more than five months to complete. The department cannot require an offender to pay for any losses due to pesticide misuse.

When clear documentation of a violation is not available, the department can dismiss the case with no regulatory action. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship declined a request for comment.

“I’ll get a response next year, and it is usually nothing, it’s just, you know, a warning letter or notification to the farmer, but nothing, there is nothing punitive there,” Singh said. “Forget punitive, there is nothing there to, you know, tell him the harm he has done.”

Rather, Singh treats this process as a paper trail of “chemical trespass.”

Singh has tried to address this problem in several ways. He rents and buys adjacent land from the neighboring farm to create a buffer zone between

his reservation and the farmland. He also manages his reserve without the use of herbicides, removing invasive weeds “surgically.”



Oak tatters from acetochlor contamination in 2026 at Prairie Oaks Reservation in LeClaire, Iowa. (Photo courtesy of Tony Singh)

He’s also set up cameras around his property to record when neighboring fields are sprayed. He captures wind speed and temperature at the time of spraying to help bolster his annual tradition of an IDALS inspection, but still he’s had “no relief.”

He hasn’t had much luck engaging elected officials either, going so far as to describe Iowa as a “captured entity.”

“Nobody wants to come here. Nobody wants to see it, even though this is a beautiful place,” Singh said. “The politicians have absolutely no empathy towards this, because they are beholden to the Farm Bureau, and that’s how they get their money.”

Feeley doesn’t fear extinction for Iowa’s state tree in general, but he has “some concern” for white oaks. He attributes the decline of white oaks partially to climate factors, including drought, but more prevalently to “lack of land management.”

Feeley said oak trees need ample sunlight. Since trees are long-lived organisms, at some point they may need to be removed to open up canopy space for direct light. This type of land management is “really lacking in Iowa,” he said.

Despite the many frustrations, Singh said he continues his rewilding project simply because it’s a part of his identity.

“Most of us are driven by an innate sense of what we think is right. And it’s in my nature to plant trees. I get innate joy out of trees,” Singh said. “When the leaves are coming out after the dormancy, it is the most wonderful feeling I get.”

WEATHER EFFECTS ON TREES

By Linda Haugen, IWOA Board Member

Tree health is influenced by weather. Past and current weather, soil conditions/site history, and damages to the host tree by insects, diseases, and other causes are often interrelated. In this short summary, we'll talk about how weather interacts with tree health, and how recent weather across Iowa may be affecting your tree health.

General effects of weather on trees

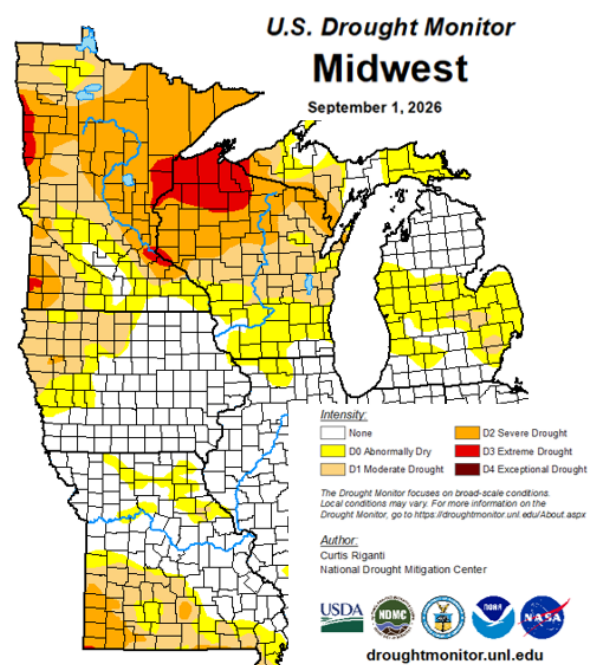
Too little water – drought. Lack of adequate water can cause outright tree death, but more often it causes enough stress that other damage agents attack and kill trees. These damage agents include insects, canker diseases, or root diseases. Under drought conditions, two-lined chestnut borers are more likely to successfully attack and breed in oak trees. Ips and other pine bark beetles are more likely to successfully attack and breed in pines. The longer a drought continues, the more stressed trees become, and the more the populations of these insects build up. With tree defenses compromised by drought, some canker fungi can grow with less constraints by the tree. Root diseases like armillaria can also gain access to weakly defended roots.

Too much water – flooding. On the other end of the scale, excessive water prevents the roots from getting adequate aeration. This is particularly evident following extended flooding during the growing season; for example, extensive tree death occurred in the Upper Mississippi River floodplain following extended summer flooding in 2019. Flash flooding can also severely impact tree health by eroding soil from root systems or burying roots with debris. Weakened or damaged trees are vulnerable to decay and other damage agents.

Wind and storms. In Iowa, we are all too familiar with the impact of straight-line winds, tornados, and other storm events. Our forests in eastern Iowa are still recovering from the impacts of the August 2020 derecho. Of note is the interaction of spring storms with oak wilt. The main way that the oak wilt fungus is carried to start new disease centers is by sap-feeding beetles (nitidulids) that have been on infected oaks visiting fresh wounds on otherwise healthy oaks. The main active period for these nitidulids is early Spring to early Summer. When

oak trees have branches broken or other damage that creates wounds during this nitidulid flight season, the nitidulids are attracted to the sap in the wounds; oak wilt fungal spores from the insect bodies then can infect the oak tree. If you have a forest of predominantly red oak affected by wind damage in April, May or June, you should be monitoring to detect oak wilt. If you want to take a deep dive into oak wilt management options, you will find good information in the **USDA Forest Service Oak Wilt Story Map**.

Temperature and Humidity. We know that late spring freeze events can damage soft shoots and emerging leaves. But heat and humidity also has an impact on trees, particularly by providing ideal conditions for leaf and needle diseases to infect and kill tree leaves. During a humid summer with lots of free moisture on the leaves, we often see a lot of spots and blights on tree leaves. Usually these do not kill the tree, but heavy or repeated defoliation can cause stress that makes trees vulnerable to other health problems. The leaf diseases I am seeing in my area right now include bur oak blight (BOB) on bur oak and an unknown leaf blotch on basswood that is causing early yellowing and loss of leaves. When leaf diseases occur late in the growing season, the trees have already completed most of their photosynthesizing for the year, so the impact on tree health is lessened.



Recent weather

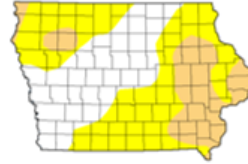
The big picture in 2026 has shown severe and highly variable weather impacts throughout the Midwest region. Currently, northwest Wisconsin is suffering extreme drought. Iowa isn't nearly as severe, but we have significant areas that have experienced abnormally dry and moderate drought conditions during the growing season. Throughout the US and the world, headlines throughout the summer were floods, hurricanes and fires; Iowa has had some isolated weather events, but not a lot of national headline news, which is good news for Iowa forests.

April was warm and wet overall; temperatures significantly above normal resulted in the phenology of some plants and trees being ahead of schedule. May was variable but ended up close to normal temperatures and below normal rainfall. June and July were wild weather months, bringing severe storms with heavy rain and winds, but not evenly distributed across the state. Although these storms brought moisture to the southeast 2/3 of Iowa, much of it came in extreme levels that caused flooding and damage. The pattern continued in August, with above normal temperatures in the southern half of Iowa, resulting in unstable weather and more rain, while the northwest corner of the state continued to miss out on the rainfall.

A Snapshot of Drought Conditions in Iowa over the past year

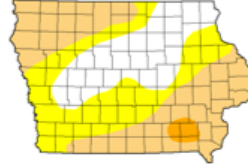
Data from: [Droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

December 2, 2025



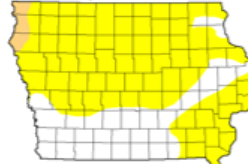
Beginning of last Winter

March 3, 2026



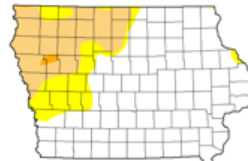
Beginning of last this Spring

June 2, 2026



Beginning of this Summer

September 1, 2026



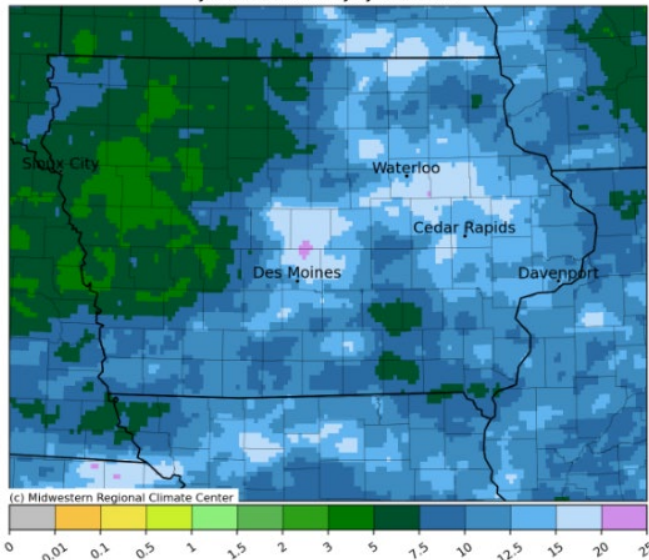
Beginning of this Fall

Intensity



Accumulated Precipitation (in)

June 01, 2026 to July 31, 2026



(c) Midwestern Regional Climate Center

Source: PRISM Weather Data

Generated on: Thu Sep 03, 2026 21:12:15 EDT

The bottom line is that summer 2026 weather impacts on trees were highly dependent on location. Trees in the northwest corner of Iowa were impacted by lack of moisture, so you may be seeing early senescence and drought damage; if dry conditions continue, your trees may be impacted by secondary damage agents. Trees in parts of central and southeast Iowa were impacted because of the storms and excess rainfall, so you may see problems related to wind, flooding, and wounding. We did have several periods of extremely uncomfortable heat, but the main impact of these heatwaves on trees was probably exacerbation of drought and instability of the weather (more storms).

Linda Haugen retired from the USDA Forest Service in 2023, after spending over 30 years assisting land managers with tree health problems throughout the Upper Midwest. For many years, she compiled a "Central States Forest Health Watch" that reported on regional tree health issues, including weather impacts.

HERBICIDE WARNINGS!!!

SAVE YOUR WINDBREAK AND DESIRABLE TREES

Read the Herbicide Label Before Using the Product

By Mark Vitosh Iowa IDNR District 12 Forester

Every year I hope I do not receive the call(s) and for the last 10 years I receive 5 to 10 of these calls every year. The call starts with: "Hello Mark this is John or Missy Doe and I have a windbreak with some sick evergreen trees. Over the last few weeks some of the branches/needles turned off color and brown/reddish and in some cases portions of the tree look dead." Since I get this call multiple times every growing season my first response now is: "Did you cut any mulberry, honeysuckle, or other unwanted vegetation from underneath these trees recently and if so did you treat the stubs with a herbicide?" In most situations (9 out of 10 times) their answer is yes. Now it is okay to cut unwanted woody vegetation from underneath desirable plants and then treat the stubs with a herbicide. The catch is you have to make sure that the herbicide is labeled for cut stump treatments and that there are no warnings on the label that indicate that the specific herbicide could be damaging to off-target plants. In most of the calls I receive the landowner used a herbicide that had a warning on the label that indicated that if it is used within the drip-line of a desirable tree or plant or adjacent to a desirable tree or plant that the desirable plant could potentially sustain damage. There are a number of herbicides commonly sold off the shelf utilized to kill woody plants and other vegetation that have warnings similar to this so it is critical to read any label before you purchase and use it to avoid being a person that has to make the call to see what is happening to their windbreak trees. It is also important to avoid using wood chips, grass clippings, and in some cases manure as mulch around trees and plants that might have herbicide residue in it that could impact adjacent plants. Again READ THE LABEL. The challenge is once the

damage is done in many cases the impacted plants do not recover.



Two different Norway spruce showing damage from herbicide used under the trees against label warning

ROUNDUP: IT'S NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE!

By Aaron Steil and Meaghan Anderson

As published by Iowa State University Extension
Yard and Garden, June 4 2025.

For more than five decades, glyphosate has been the active ingredient associated with the trade name Roundup®. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide used in many home landscape applications to control a wide range of grasses and broadleaf plants. It is non-volatile, which limits its potential for drift and damage to nearby desirable plants. Additionally, glyphosate is unavailable to plants in the soil, allowing for planting within days of application, rather than weeks or months as with many other herbicides.

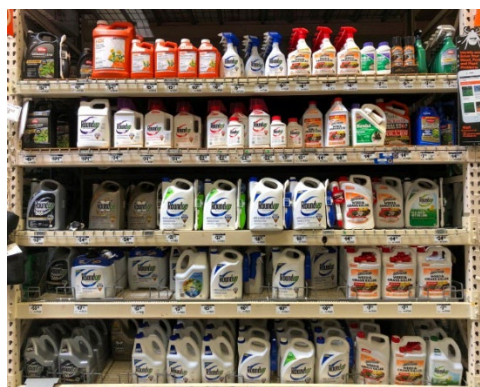


Glyphosate was frequently used in landscapes for a variety of situations, such as preparing an area for a new perennial bed¹

Roundup No Longer Equals Glyphosate

This herbicide is so commonly used that the brand name Roundup is often used interchangeably with glyphosate. Starting in 2024, however, new formulations of herbicides were released that use the brand name Roundup, but do not contain glyphosate. Instead, they contain a combination of multiple active ingredients. In some cases, this mix is intended to create a product that can be used in a similar way to glyphosate, and in other cases, it is a product that acts selectively for use in settings like lawns or for brush control. This creates a significant amount of confusion among gardeners who instinctively grab Roundup from the shelf, intending to use it as they always have.

These changes to the Roundup-branded herbicides mean it's important for gardeners to look more closely at the label to ensure they are purchasing the product aligned with their intended use. When not used in accordance with the label directions, these products are costly investments that may be less effective on target weeds, more likely to damage desirable plants, and could have long waiting periods to replant after treatment (not to mention it's against the law!)



Roundup is no longer synonymous with the active ingredient glyphosate. Many different Roundup-branded products are now available using different active ingredients.

What is Changing?

New formulations of herbicides are being sold under the Roundup brand name. These products contain a mix of active ingredients that differ from glyphosate in their modes of action, weed types controlled, movement through the plant and soil, time to see results, residual action in the soil, and recommended use in the landscape.

Details about many of the active ingredients found in new formulations of Roundup-branded herbicides can be found on tables in article at <https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/article/2025/06/roundup-its-not-what-it-used-be>.

The Future of Glyphosate



It is important to read and follow label directions as not all Roundup-branded products are intended for the same use¹

While products with the active ingredient glyphosate are still available on some store shelves under different names, it is likely that they will become less available to homeowners in the coming years. This means that gardeners will need to be more savvy about their herbicide selection and use. Herbicide users will need to know what type of weeds the herbicide formulation is intended to control so it can be used most effectively. It will be particularly important to understand the residual activity of the product, as some formulations may require a wait of as little as 14 days to replant, and others could be 120+ days. Some formulations will readily be absorbed by leaves and others by both leaves and roots, making them more likely to negatively affect nearby desirable plants.

It's always been important to read and follow label directions on all herbicides. Now, more than ever, it will require a more discerning eye to use the right product in the right way.

DISTRICT FORESTER SPOTLIGHT

CHIP MURROW URBAN FORESTRY SPECIALIST

By Steve Meyer, Timber Talk Editor



Chip Murrow has been the IDNR Urban Forestry specialist since 2023. It's a position he sought for 30 years and eventually came to it by rather a circuitous route. Originally from rural Altoona, Chip attended high school at Southeast Polk and began college as a math major, but switched to pursue a Forestry degree at ISU during his sophomore year. He received his BS in Forestry Management in 1995 and went to work for Commonwealth Edison Utility in Chicago area as a Forestry Planner where he planned tree work for crews working on utility lines for one year. He then came back to ISU and did research work and some teaching while getting his MS in Forestry Administration/Management in 1998. After that he worked as the Arborist for Mason City for two years and then went to Nebraska Forest Service where he did community forestry work for nine years. In that position he traveled the state and worked with communities and the utilities. He wanted to get back to Iowa so when a Community Forestry position came up with ITC Transmission (a utility company) he returned to do more community forestry work in Iowa and Southern Minnesota for nine years. From there he worked for White's Tree Service in Ames for three years before finally fulfilling his quest for a position with the IDNR as Urban Forester.

As Urban Forester (his exact title is Service Forestry Program Specialist) Chip covers the whole state and helps State Urban Forester Emma Hanigan with tree inventories for communities. He is in charge of managing urban grants for communities like the Trees For Kids Grants and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Grants. He also does conservation education for forestry

and is the Project Learning Tree (PLT) Coordinator for the state. He is in charge of the forestry display at the Iowa State Fair and is at the fair the whole time it is on. He really likes doing things like being Smokey Bear—which he does a lot “It's another way to bring about some education,” says Chip. When DNR does DNR night at the Iowa Cubs Game in Des Moines he does Smokey Bear there and has thrown out the opening ball at the game as Smokey Bear.

“Ninety percent of my time as Urban Forester is spent working with people not trees, I enjoy working with people whether they be adults or kids and passing on my knowledge of trees to them. Hopefully I get them excited about trees and out planting them,” Chip explains, adding: “The biggest challenge with urban forestry is to get administrators and people who make decisions to recognize that trees are a necessary part of infrastructure. They provide a lot of benefits that would reduce costs of other urban things like water retention and quality and shading asphalt from the sun.” Chip's is most proud of the number of kids he has planted trees with, noting: “It's always a great joy to get out with the kids and plant trees.” He estimates he has worked with 60 schools or more over the years.

Chip's wife Michelle is a client service specialist at an insurance company. They have two children; son Rob who is an architect, and daughter Brooke who is a 5th grade teacher.



STATE FOREST NURSERY TAKING ORDERS NOW

Visit nursery.iowadnr.gov to browse available tree species, current inventory, and to place an order: During the checkout process, you will be able to choose to pick up at the State Forest Nursery or have your order shipped, as well as select a fall or spring distribution date.

NOTE: Certain items are for spring distribution only and they will be labeled as such when viewing their product page.

WOODLAND CRITTERS

YELLOW BREASTED CHAT

(*Icteria virens*)

By Steve Meyer, Editor



It happens to me once or twice every year. I'm sitting on the dock on my pond in the middle of one of woodlots for a morning reprieve. I flip on my Merlin Bird ID for a rundown of all the songbirds serenading me and a totally new and interesting bird pops up. Most recently it was the yellow breasted chat (*Icteria virens*), a bird whose song is described as a series of widely spaced croaks, whistles and short repeated phrases that can be mistaken for the mimic of a gray catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*).

The yellow breasted chat is a large songbird in its own family, Icteriidae, that is found in North and Central America.

It is a shy, skulking species of bird, often being heard but not seen, as was my experience. Male and female yellow breasted chat are very similar in appearance and size, having a thick bill, long tail, bright yellow throat and breast, white belly and olive back. They also have sharp white "spectacles" on their dark face. They are seven to eight inches long with a wing span of 10 to 11 inches and weigh .8 to 1.3 ounces.

The yellow-breasted chat is found in areas where dense shrubbery is common. Today, its habitat often consists of abandoned farmland and other rural areas where overgrown vegetation proliferates throughout North America. It breeds from the southern plains of Canada to central Mexico, and mainly migrates to Mexico and Central America for the winter, although some may overwinter in coastal areas farther north. The breeding habitat is dense, brushy vegetation or hedgerows. The nest is a bulky cup made of grasses, leaves, strips of bark, and

stems of weeds, and lined with finer grasses, wiry plant stems, pine needles, and sometimes roots and hair. The nest is placed in thick shrub and often only about eight feet above the ground

Yellow-breasted chats are declining in eastern North America due to habitat loss and degradation due to deforestation and urban development. This species, though less vulnerable than other cup nesters, is still sometimes victim to brood parasitism from brown-headed cowbirds that have taken advantage of the fragmentation of eastern forests to expand their range during the last century.



WOODLAND FLORA

WILD OR RIVERBANK GRAPE

(*Vitis riparia*)

By Steve Meyer, Editor



Wild grape vine and leaves

Wild grape, (*Vitis riparia*) also called riverbank grape, is a native species in Iowa. It is a perennial woody vine that grows along woodland edges, near rivers, streams, and in disturbed areas such as railroad right-of-ways. It is not an invasive plant but it can be aggressive in some settings and become a nuisance when it seems to attack a particular tree by draping it in an overwhelming dense shroud of vines. In mature forests and along riverbanks, it tends to be less problematic and can coexist with native species.

Riverbank grape is one of the most valuable native vines for wildlife, supporting a wide array of insect herbivores and producing abundant fruit for birds and mammals. The berries can be used by humans for jams or dried fruit.



Wild grapes

Riverbank grape thrives in full sun to partial shade and prefers moist to mesic soils but tolerates a wide range of textures, including clay, loam, and sand. Its vines climb by forked tendrils, often reaching 30–50 feet when supported by trees, fences, or trellises. Without support, it forms sprawling mats close to the ground. The leaves are broadly heart-shaped, three to six inches long, coarsely toothed, and sometimes shallowly lobed. Their upper surface is smooth and medium green, while the underside is paler and softly hairy along the veins. Young shoots are smooth and green to reddish, sometimes with a bluish waxy coating, and the mature bark becomes shaggy and peeling with age, making the vine easy to identify even in winter. In late spring, riverbank grape produces loose, drooping clusters of small greenish, fragrant, white flowers up to five inches long. By late summer into early fall, the flowers give way to clusters of small, round berries about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter. These ripen to a deep purple or bluish-black, often developing a whitish bloom. The berries are juicy with a strong, tangy flavor that sweetens after frost and each contains one to four seeds.

Riverbank Grape is a keystone species in many Midwestern landscapes, supporting a rich community of insect herbivores that in turn feed birds and other wildlife.

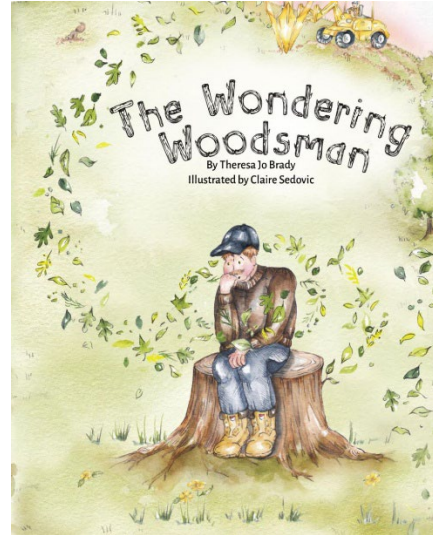
Wild grape is an important early-successional species, quickly colonizing woodland edges and disturbed soils, where it helps stabilize erosion-prone areas. Its rapid growth and climbing habit

create vertical structure and shade, which benefit many wildlife species.

Management of wild grape is generally unnecessary unless it is causing specific problems. In a cultivated or managed area, it may be mechanically removed or selectively pruned



BOOK REVIEW



THE WONDERING WOODSMAN

By Theresa Jo Brady

CHILDREN'S BOOK IS TRIBUTE TO PAST IWOA BOARD MEMBER'S LEGACY

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor

Theresa Jo Brady, daughter-in-law of the late Tom Brady who was a past IWOA board member and president has published a children's book, *The Wondering Woodsman*, that is both a tribute to Tom's life and devotion to trees and an inspirational/educational book about tree planting and conservation. In her own words, here's what she says about the book and why she wrote it: "I've always been a writer, mainly for children. I decided one day to interview Tom about the process—what it took to get all the trees out there and he filled me in on the plan, putting together the plot and the framework. The book started out to be something for our grandchildren so we could enjoy our time out on the trails and all of the work Tom had done

for them with all the trees he planted. I thought about what interested children and I asked him about his tools and the big machines (tree planters etc.). I have the planter in the book that he and my mother-in-law sat on and planted trees side-by-side. In 1999 in the span of one week with the help of family and friends they planted 12,000 saplings. Also, because I'm a master gardener, I wanted the vocabulary there for future curriculum for any classes I would do for children. The greatest thing is that you need to start educating children about conservation and the woods. You have to start them young with conservation education so it sticks with them. Any child that has grown up in the woods will tell you why they love the woods. I want to grab this new generation that is stuck in AI and on technology and bring them outside--I want them to love the outdoors and trees and be curious so that when they grow up they will be serious about conservation and continuing those kind of efforts."

Tom was a man of many trees. He was endeavoring to plant every species of tree in the northern hemisphere that would grow on their land and their Toad Valley Golf Course. He also did a 300-acre tree planting on their 410 acres (which includes the golf course).

Theresa self-published the book through Amazon. She has done a couple book signings. She sells *The Wondering Woodsman* through Amazon and at the Toad Valley Golf Course Club House (Theresa Jo Brady, Toad Valley Golf Course, 237 NE 80th St., Pleasant Hill, IA [50327. info@toadvalley.com](mailto:info@toadvalley.com)). The book is for children ages 4-8 and is the first of three books she is publishing. The second book is about tree conservation and leaving a legacy. The third book is about a female character (her mother-in-law) who grew up a hard worker and helped plant the forest. "There could not be a story without her in it," says Teresa. She hopes to have the other two books out this fall.

Founded in 1987 and rebranded in 2026, the Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance 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.

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.



PRESIDENTS COLUMN

We are now Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance, but still the IWOA.

Changes are happening! We've followed through with an initiative to establish IWOA as a non-profit entity and have secured 501c3 non-profit status with the IRS. We may have previously represented ourselves as a non-profit entity, which we are, but legally we weren't. Now we are thanks to the efforts of Board Member Ruth McAndrews who spearheaded this initiative. Ruth consulted with several legal entities knowledgeable about 501c3's and we were advised to make a name change. Hence, we are now the Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance—still the IWOA.

Being an officially recognized non-profit may carry some administrative burdens, but it does allow IWOA to spread its branches. Anyone making a contribution to IWOA can now legally deduct their contributions from their income taxes. Being a 501c3 also opens the doors for us to apply for federal, state and foundation grants that require 501c3 status. I have a feeling we may pursue something new and innovative for use of some grant funds.

Change in Membership Categories

The IWOA board voted to change the membership categories from six to two. The two are woodland owners who can vote and non-woodland owners (associate members) who do not vote but want to support IWOA. Other categories that are no longer necessary were defined by a larger payment of dues. Instead, now, the additional contributions can be recognized and encouraged as supportive donations in the newsletter and/or on the website.

Cathy Wilkie Retires

Cathy Wilkie who faithfully served as our membership secretary since 2001 has retired from the position, having served the board for 25 years. She will be honored at our Fall Field Day on October 27. As Cathy explained it to me, she originally got started in order to help a friend of hers who was a board member. As far as I can tell, she served in this position longer than anyone has served in any position with the IWOA. We thank her profusely for all of her efforts and assistance over the years.

Administrative Assistant Position Filled

Sherri Sisson, who had been serving as IWOA Treasurer has taken the position of Administrative Assistant with IWOA. The IWOA board made the decision to combine the Membership Secretary and treasurer position along with a couple new responsibilities into a single Administrative Assistant position. We are delighted that Sherri took the position.

New Official Address

With the changes that have occurred so also comes a change in our official address. The new address is Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance, PO Box 211, Charles City, IA 50616-0211.

Ballots Coming In The Mail

Within the next week to 10 days all of our members will be receiving a ballot in the mail for our annual board of director's position election. We have three positions up for election. The ballot will contain candidate's name and a short bio for each one. I encourage all of our members who are

woodland owners to exercise their membership responsibility by voting! We have three board member positions up for election and four candidates. Along with the ballot will be the full agenda and registration information for our October 27 Fall Field Day at the State Nursery in Ames.

MWSP Classes

I attended kickoff sessions for both Master Woodland Steward Program (MWSP) classes that are going on this fall, one being led by Emma Kerns, Northeast Iowa Forestry Field Specialist and the other by William Beck, PhD, ISU Extension Forestry Specialist. Since the program was revised and started again in 2022 after several years of acquiescence, there have been over 200 graduates. In 2022 one class was provided, in subsequent years there were two classes annually and based on demand this year there have been three sessions. It is refreshing to see such a vibrant interest in people wanting to know how to take proper care of our forest resources.

~~~~~

As you can see, we have made some significant changes and have a lot going on with IWOA. I also think we have some wonderful things in store. I was privileged to meet with a number of you at the recent Tree Farmers Field Day and I look forward to meeting with many of you at the forthcoming Shimek Field Day on October 6 and the IWOA Field Day on October 27.

I welcome any input that any of you have about the direction IWOA is going and anything you think we should be doing. Feel free to contact me via e-mail.

Steve Meyer, IWOA President  
gfdchief@netins.net

## **IWOA BOARD MEETING**

May 19, 2026, Edgewood, Iowa

This was a brief meeting following the IWOA Spring Field Day. The meeting was called to order by President Steve Meyer at approximately 3:10 PM. Board members present were: Steve Meyer, Jim White, Ray Lehn, Phil McCune, Ed Kocal,

Linda Haugen, Paul Millice, and Tim Meyer. Ruth McAndrews and Phil McCune could not attend.

Ray Lehn moved to approve the April 16, 2026, minutes of the meeting in Amana, which Ruth McAndrews sent out to all board members via email. Jim White seconded. Motion carried.

There was no treasurer's report at this meeting. There was a request to reimburse the cost of Ed Kocal's overnight lodging on the night prior to the field day, as it was not feasible for him to travel home after field day preparations the day before and then back early for the field day. Tim Meyer proposed reimbursement. Jim White seconded. Motion carried.

### **Notations:**

During the field day, Steve Meyer gave a brief update to the membership on board activities, including the efforts to reorganize. He mentioned that we have many new members, primarily due to the opportunity recently created to sign up for a first year of membership at no cost. He also noted that the membership can and should grow by members inviting their friends and neighbors who would benefit from receiving sound forest management information. Paul Millice provided a brief update on legislative action that affects woodland owners. He intends to write this up for the newsletter.

### **Old and Ongoing Business:**

Membership and distribution of newsletter: Steve has been able to obtain the email addresses of all 99 County Conservation Officers. He proposed that we send the electronic version of the newsletter to all of them, as we do to all DNR District Foresters. Board agreed.

Reorganization of the IWOA administrative support: President Steve Meyer has spoken with Cathy Wilke, and she is agreeable to whatever organization the board proposes. Linda Haugen moved that we proceed with combining the Membership Secretary with the Treasurer position, into a combined Administrative Assistant with monetary compensation. Ray Lehn seconded. Motion carried. Steve will move forward to drafting a position description for the new position and will share it out with other board members. Since this will require a change to the by-laws, this

restructuring will be presented to the membership at the next field day.

Steve updated the board that Ruth has begun the process to apply for 501c3 non-profit organization with federal recognition under the name Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance. This too will require development of new by-laws (adjusted from the current ones), which will require approval of the membership during a membership meeting at the next field day.

### **New Business**

Iowa Deer Classic: Paul Millice noted that for multiple years IWOA has been able to have a free booth in exchange for providing seminar/workshops at the event. The effort involved in presenting both the seminars and preparing the booth is a heavy workload and he may need a replacement or at least additional assistance to make this possible to continue. There will be further discussion on how to fill this need.

Fall Field Day/Meeting: The location has not yet been selected. The Board discussed trying to have it in September, perhaps near Ames, Iowa. There may be opportunities to include the State Forest Nursery, ISU Forestry, and/or the ISU arboretum (note: the tree collection on ISU campus, the Reimen Gardens, and the Iowa Arboretum near Madrid all are different entities). Ed will talk with Billy Beck about ISU connections; Ray will speak with Jeff Goerndt about nursery.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25

Minutes recorded by Linda Haugen, IWOA Board Member

### **IWOA SCHOLARSHIP CHANGES**

The IWOA Directors have changed their Annual Scholarship Program. Iowa students may seek a Scholarship of \$1,000 directly from the IWOA during Winter 2026-27. Potential applicants must be in a Conservation or Forestry program at any Iowa college. There is no longer a requirement for a family member to be a member of the IWOA, however the student applicant is encouraged to attend potential workshops when possible. An application can be sent to [ruthsmca@gmail.com](mailto:ruthsmca@gmail.com) or [lhaugenmn@gmail.com](mailto:lhaugenmn@gmail.com), once the criteria are announced this winter.

## IWOA Board

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## IWOA Support Staff

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

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

## THROUGH YOUR LENSE

*By Ryan Schmidt  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation*

A practice of patience and a pursuit of understanding — land stewardship is an intentional act that evokes a sense of artistry as I work in partnership with the world around me. The richness of the natural world is everywhere, if, of course, I slow down long enough to appreciate it. When I do, my role in the artwork becomes clearer. I collect my thoughts, create the vision and allow my thoughtful touch to add to the existing ecological work of art that I call home.

Equipped with an informed, deliberate approach and an assortment of tools, I seek to play a role in the artwork, acting in a way that creates positive change for our plants and wildlife. Whether it's a brushstroke of fire or a splatter of prairie seeds on the ground, I'm adding to that work of art one step at a time. A steady hand and clear purpose translate my mind's eye onto the landscape, one that benefits our land, water and wildlife.

The benefit, or even the outcome, of this artmaking may not be immediately clear, but faith in the action provides confidence that I'm moving in the right direction. The approach will ebb and flow, never a well-defined path. Time and patience, along with careful observation, continue the story of the artwork that will never be completed. The results will show in time beyond my own. A complex natural world continues to evolve until the next land steward enacts their vision of artistry.

Be an artful steward when given the opportunity, or support those actively creating thoughtful influence on the land. As we have for many generations, our role is intertwined with the rhythms of the natural world that play out every day. I am consistently reminded of this as my art takes shape.

— RYAN SCHMIDT

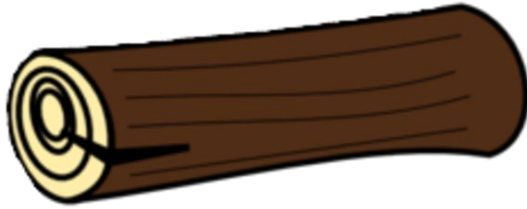
INHF Central Iowa Land Stewardship Director

*This article originally appeared in the Spring 2026 issue of [Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation's](#) quarterly magazine and is reprinted by permission of INHF.*

## TREE SEED COLLECTOR TRAINING FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Go To:

[https://treeseed.umn.edu/?utm\\_source=mmw&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=2026\\_08&j=14141058&sfmc\\_sub=735502087&l=67658\\_HTML&u=286476766&mid=6416246&jb=1007](https://treeseed.umn.edu/?utm_source=mmw&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2026_08&j=14141058&sfmc_sub=735502087&l=67658_HTML&u=286476766&mid=6416246&jb=1007)



## WHAT'S THAT TREE WORTH?

By Gretchen Cline  
Forester at Geode Forestry, Inc.

This unusually wet, late-summer weather has significantly tightened log inventories across local sawmills. However, this is a booming time for log buyers. As soon as crops start coming out of the fields, and timber becomes more accessible, those log yards will fill up quickly.

The lack of demand for stave logs has put downward pressure on the White Oak lumber market, as stave mills have transitioned to sawing lumber until the stave market recovers. This has fortunately been offset by continued high demand for quality logs in the export markets. Walnut is still the price leader overall, but White Oak is seeing an even higher demand. Red Oak, meanwhile, remains stuck in the narrow price range that it's been in for a number of years.

Compounding these market dynamics, persistently high fuel costs continue to squeeze the supply chain. As a result, lower-quality harvests and logging jobs in remote locations will likely remain on hold until operating expenses moderate.

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 \$3.00-\$4.50 (much higher for veneer grade)  
White Oak \$0.90-\$1.20  
Bur Oak \$0.60-\$0.80  
Sugar Maple \$0.45-\$0.55  
Silver Maple \$0.30-\$0.40  
Red Oak \$0.30-\$0.35  
Black Cherry \$0.25-\$0.40

Hickory \$0.30-\$0.35  
Black Oak \$0.20-\$0.25  
Ash \$0.35-\$0.45 (healthy)  
Basswood \$0.15-\$0.25  
Elm \$0.20-\$0.50  
Hackberry \$0.15-\$0.25  
Cottonwood \$0.15-\$0.25

### 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.



## AT THE WOODPILE

### WE NEED TO DEMAND MORE!

By Ed Kocal, IWOA Board Member

When it comes to implementing conservation practices, nearly all of us who are reading this are likely doing the right thing. However, we are a small minority of landowners. As you are aware, Iowa has some serious water quality issues. Besides poor water quality causing recreational uses to be limited in some areas, our drinking water is now more commonly being impacted by ag runoff as well as urban and industrial sources.

We know that planting perennial vegetation along streams and in other highly erodible areas is key to reducing bad runoff. Whether it be establishing trees, grasses, forbs, hay crops, or some of each of these practices, planting a riparian buffer of some type makes a huge difference in filtering out sediment, nutrients, and many other contaminants. In addition, creating wetlands, saturated buffers, bioreactors, raingardens, bioswales, prairie strips and various other practices accomplish similar benefits. The average homeowner can even do little things in his or her yard to help the situation. Collectively these little measures have a large impact. There are financial incentives for landowners to establish these practices. It is working, however in my opinion, it is too little.

Our neighbors to the north in Minnesota have a law that states that there must be a minimum of a 50-foot permanent vegetative buffer along public waters to include rivers, streams, and lakes. Would we having something similar be asking too much of Iowans? I don't think so! We know what the problem is and know what the solutions are. It is time to do more. Please talk to your elected officials about water quality and vote appropriately. Support conservation initiatives whether it be IWILL (Iowa's Water and Land Legacy unanimously passed by voters several years ago) or some other type of legislation. The future of Iowa's limited natural resources lies with us.

## FOREST RESERVE

In the waning minutes of last year's Legislative session (2025) the Iowa Senate passed and forwarded SF633 to the House. If you remember this was a convoluted bill to tax Forest Reserve landowners at a different tax rate depending on where you lived. The House did not take the bill up at that time. Then this year's Legislative session the House Ways and means subcommittee approved SF 633, and for whatever reason it never was acted upon by the full Committee.

It is up to each and every one of us to get vocal and to get active. Talk with your friends and neighbors about the Value of the Forest Reserve. Trees generate oxygen, absorb carbon, and reduce soil loss. Trees are a clean water tool. Mention that

Iowa is the most altered state in the nation. We are losing Trees at an alarming rate.

Call an email your Iowa State Legislators, tell them that you vote and that you are concerned about Iowa declining Water Quality!

Paul Millice—IWOA Board Member

### 30 IOWA COUNTIES RECEIVE \$3,049,600 IN FORESTRY GRANTS

The Iowa Forest Resiliency Partnership Program has funded project grants totaling \$3,049,600 in 30 Iowa counties. The grant is provided by the US Forest Service. Projects funded include: 300+ acres of Harvest in 8 counties; 3,708 acres of Forest Stand Improvement; 1,222 acres of Invasive Species Removal; 710 acres of Tree & Shrub Planting; 419 acres of Prescribed Burning; 160 acres of Prescribed Grazing. The projects will impact 5,235 acres of Iowa woodlands and must be completed by December 31, 2029. Counties where the projects will be completed include: Allamakee, Boone, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Clayton, Dallas, Delaware, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fayette, Greene, Harden, Harrison, Henry, Howard, Jackson, Jefferson, Jones, Linn, Lucas, Mahaska, Marshall, Mitchell, Monona, Polk, Pottawattamie, Story, Warren, Winneshiek, Woodbury,

### “FREEDOM TO FLOURISH”

By Tim Meyer, IWOA Vice-president

On a hot August Saturday, recently, I was on an organized bike ride in Van Buren County, Iowa which ventured into Missouri a couple miles, just south of Farmington, Iowa. Farmington is one of the towns very near Shimek State Forest in SE Iowa. As highway 81 came back Into Iowa from the south, a welcome sign greeted travelers. It read “Iowa, Freedom to Flourish”. When we do forest stand improvement, or work in our forests aren't we creating “Freedom to Flourish”, for our desired species? Oaks, and other desired species of trees need sunlight and “freedom” from other competitors to “flourish”. Creating the right amount of sunlight and appropriate “stocking rate” in our forests takes science and some art. Our DNR foresters and private foresters are very helpful in this regard. They can help get us started on the right path and

keep us motivated to continue to manage our forests for success. “Freedom to Flourish” is a good term in gardening, farming and forest management. I think it even reminds me that the freedoms we have to improve our forest resources are in our hands if we have a goal, a team to help us and a scoreboard to help keep us on track. I am thankful to our members and foresters for their mentoring. I have to remind myself that the resources are available to me to succeed in my goals, and that I truly have the “Freedom to Flourish” if I just get started. What you do in your forest or woodland makes Iowa a better place!



## SCOTT JAMES

USFWS Private Lands Fish and Wildlife  
Biologist

By Steve Meyer, *Timber Talk* Editor



Scott James has served as USFWS Private Lands Fish and Wildlife Biologist in Iowa for the past six years. He is another resource available to Iowa woodland owners and is one of three USFWS Private Lands Fish and Wildlife Biologist and a State Coordinator assigned to Iowa. This falls under the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Scott covers 35 counties in Eastern Iowa and NW Illinois. In Iowa he covers an area roughly from Louisa County up to Jackson County and westward to I-380.

Scott explains that he works with landowners who are interested in voluntarily doing habitat restoration, establishment and management activities on their properties. He provides technical assistance and financial assistance so that they can complete their goals for fish and wildlife on their property that align with USFWS goals for fish and wildlife. This differs from Iowa DNR foresters whose major focus is on trees and woodlands. His focus is on habitat for fish and wildlife and federally entrusted species (migratory birds and threatened or endangered species). He does partner with Iowa district foresters and there is some overlap in what they do, but they both have specialized areas of emphasis. He says they work with a number of conservation partners. “We couldn’t do a lot of our projects without these awesome conservation partners—they are able to help put up the workload and the financial load and help everybody’s resources go farther to put a more robust product on the land.”

Most people learn about USFWS services through word of mouth. When they contact him, he does an internal ranking process as he reviews the habitat and different species that will benefit from the habitat they are working on, and then he figures out if and how he can help. There is nothing strict and official—there is a lot of flexibility in how he approaches project and implements them with landowners. “In a nutshell, they reach out to me or I may spot a particular project and see some potential. The more benefit a project has for a higher number of species helps me determine how I can help,” says Scott. Property owner may get assistance for plantings, enhancement and restoration activities. He says he is working with around 40 landowners in Iowa right now on a wide variety of projects ranging from wetlands projects that benefit a wide variety of species and benefit water quality to hill and bluff savannah restorations that benefit a number of bird and insect species.

Most rewarding part of job is when a landowner who is sees a wildlife response from that work—especially when it benefits a rare species or a species of cultural significance. An example being a landowner who wants to do pollinator work and has monarch butterflies and rusty patch bumble bees begin showing up or maybe a landowner who likes pheasant and quail and hasn’t had quail on the property and they do habitat work resulting in quail

occupying their property for the first time in 30 years. The things that are a real priority with him is savannah restoration specifically to benefit pollinators and savannah specific birds.

Scott received a degree in Zoology from Southern Illinois University, then served a year in the Army National Guard overseas, then worked as a technician doing waterfowl research. He then became a farm bill wildlife biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Missouri and Illinois for eight years before starting his job with the USFS. He lives in Durant, Iowa, with his wife Stephanie plus a couple dogs and cats. Following is his contact information.

Scott D. James  
Private Lands Biologist, USFWS  
phone: 309-207-3403 (cell)  
e-mail: [scott\\_james@fws.gov](mailto:scott_james@fws.gov)



## 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: [lucassis@live.com](mailto:lucassis@live.com) (Insured)

After 22 years selling campfire wood, this is my last year. Therefore, I have the following items for sale. Contact Larry Wiley at 319-573-7965

1. ATV log arch. Handles 24-inch diameter by 12-foot long logs. \$750



2. Home-made log cart. \$750



3. Wood storage Pallets. Will hold approximately 1/4 cord. \$25 each



4. 3/8 inch by 5-foot rebar tree guard stakes. \$.75 each

I have a swing blade sawmill for sale: Peterson 8" WPF, 24 hp. Honda, will cut 48" to 20' Russell Wilkins, Wilkins Tree Farm, 9602 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., Runnells, IA 50237. (515)-360-0139 [russellm28@msn.com](mailto:russellm28@msn.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 four times a year in March, June, September and December. 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.

# SCENES FROM TREE FARMERS FIELD DAY

September 9 2026

Wayne Wangsness Farm, Decorah

Eighty people attended the 2026 Tree Farmers Field Day on September 9, 2026 at the Wayne Wangsness Farm, Decorah near Decorah. Sessions held during the day-long field day included: Tree Farm and Organic Farming; Crop Tree Release and TSI; Electric Chainsaws; Songbird habitat in pole-size timber stands, Quality Timber Management, Clearcut vs. Selective harvest, Songbird habitat in early successional stands.



Wayne Wangsness with the 'Burner' cultivator he uses in his organic farming operation.



Anna Buckhardt, IDNR Avian Biologist presented on songbird habitat in early successional stands and in pole-size timber stands.



Troy Heeren from the ISU Interim Dept. shared his knowledge of electric chainsaws and chainsaw safety.



Greg Heidebrink, IDNR District Forester provided forest management tips.



Maison Hubrig, IDNR District Forester, gave a presentation on crop tree release

# 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

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

### Member Information:

First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Ph. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Business or Cell Ph. \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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.*

SEND FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO  
 IWOA, P.O. Box 211,  
 Charles City, IA 50616--0211



Timber Talk, September 2026  
 Iowa Woodland Owners Alliance  
 PO Box 211  
 Charles City, IA 50616-0211  
 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 Alliance  
 and Iowa Tree Farmer's

PRSTD STD.  
 U.S POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Dyersville, IA  
 Permit No. 28