



Articles

- Yard & Lawn
- Garden
- Nature & Trails
- Pasture & Fields
- Animals
- Workshop
- **Rural Living**
- Equipment Corner

Change your
Subscription
Information

Contact Homestead

▼ Rural Living (Fall 2006)

You could have a goldmine in your backyard**By Dale McDonald**

Next time you take a walk through your woodlot, look beyond the simple beauty and make an inventory of sorts. See those prime grade black walnut trees? One thousand board feet of lumber could easily bring \$1,200 at the mill. The same amount of red oak is worth about \$650. Then there's veneer-grade black cherry that could top \$2,500, or western red cedar that averages about \$900. It's true, you can have your cake and eat it too when properly managing your forest. You can keep the beauty, the aesthetics, and the wildlife, and still turn a profit.

To get top value for your trees, however, means paying attention to trends as well as market prices. Tim Arnzen, owner of Arnzen Forestry Services in Campbell, Ky., suggests you study the markets.

**Values change**

Managing a woodlot with an eye to the future also is important. For example, Arnzen cites an acreage that was being logged for red oak. As a service to the forest, the loggers double-girdled a massive, valueless beech tree that had been severely damaged by a forest fire some 40 years ago. "Although badly scarred," Arnzen says, "this beech would likely have lived many more decades, occupying this fertile site where black walnut, black cherry, red oak, sugar maple, and white ash would thrive. Wildlife also will benefit from the tree's demise. Once dead, woodpeckers will begin their work, creating cavities in the tree's upper bole and crown. Unlike the fire scar at the tree's base, these cavities will become home and nursery for a variety of species."

Long-term asset

. For Bill Arsenault, who retired on 360 acres near Elkton, Ore., long-term management is a way of life. He divided his acres into nine, 40-acre units, and handles each section independently of the others. "We've always had a management plan," he says, "but we recently completed a new one. We took a complete inventory, and did growth projections for 40 years by plot, age class, and so on. The State of Oregon encourages this, and they even provide a cost share of 50% for landowners." Arsenault focuses on what he calls a balanced system. He logs Douglas fir, grand fir, and coastal white fir at a sustainable level that matches the forest's growth rate.

"Each year the forest grows 4% to 5%, so that's how much we harvest," he explains. "We also have special areas with hiking trails that are basically set aside. After every harvest we replant, and we also do selective harvests to open the canopy. That promotes health. You get good sunlight that helps grow the understory which is important to wildlife."

General contractor

At harvest, Arsenault is like a general contractor. He hires loggers and haulers, manages the replanting, and deals with the mills. He averages about 100,000 board feet a year, but he once went three years without cutting any timber, focusing on reforestation instead. He also realizes the future is not in his hands. "We want family forests to stay in family hands," he says, "so our three children are with us in a family partnership. The whole family participates."