

SWWA Fall Woodlot Tour 2023

Saturday, November 4, 2023 started out drizzly, but the rain had stopped by 10:00, when about 25 members and non-members gathered at the Thamesville, Ontario woodlot of Allan & Betty Hubbell.

Attendees helped themselves to coffee, tea, and cookies as they arrived, and waited for the group to gather. They were also offered pawpaws, compliments of Donald Craig and his grove of pawpaw trees. Some attendees had never seen nor tasted the fruit of this Carolinian species.

Betty and Allan Hubbell spoke briefly about the history of the woodlot, and their participation in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP)

As we walked a portion of the trails, Forester, Donald Craig pointed out various species and shared information on a variety of topics related to Forest Management.

A butternut tree, outside the forest area, in the Hubbells' yard, produced many nuts this year, and guests were offered to take some away for either eating or planting. Butternut canker is evident on this tree, and Donald spoke of the efforts by the Forest Gene Conservation Authority to recover this endangered species. The group viewed several other large butternut trees at the edge of the woodlot, all except one showing signs of the canker.

Two invasive tree species were discussed: White Mulberry and Black Locust, both growing in sunny areas close to the bush. The invasive shrub, Multi-flora Rose, has challenged the Hubbells. They have also tackled the native grapevines, where they threaten to smother healthy desirable trees.

The trail took us past a group of sycamore, tulip, and coffee trees, all Carolinian species planted by the Hubbells in recent years.

A large Ironwood (Hop Hornbeam) was viewed, with discussion about estimating the age of large trees using circumference divided by pi (ie:diameter), multiplied by a growth factor specific to the species. The estimation for this Ironwood (growth factor 7.0), came in at 120 years.

Large oaks and maples had also been measured, and estimates of ages calculated as old as 200 years.

Alternate Dogwood (Pagoda), Silky Dogwood, Gray Dogwood, Red Osier, and Flowering Dogwood all grow in this woodlot, and Donald helped us identify the various types.

We observed an American Crab Apple, Nannyberry, Wild Plum, American Bittersweet, and Clematis (Virgin's Bower).

The trail took us past the pond, which the Hubbells dug in 2015, (in conjunction with the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority) and attendees were invited to walk a short extension of the trail to view the Tall Grass field, (planted the same year, also with assistance from the LTVCA), adjacent to the woods.

The tour ended with Donald pointing out a large White Elm (American Elm), a survivor of the Dutch Elm Disease, advising that the Virginia Creeper, currently clinging to its trunk, be cut and monitored to discourage it from taking the tree's light.