

Treeways

June 2013

Maintaining Your Country Estate

Many of us have lived in typical urban or suburban neighborhoods with open lawns, a few trees scattered around the home, and close neighbors before we moved to Sunfish Lake. Most homes in Sunfish Lake offer the privacy of large wooded lots often associated with wetlands, intermittent waterways, woodlands, meadows, and relatively tame wild animals. The care and keeping of our bit of paradise is very different from maintaining a lawn and landscape in urban St. Paul or Bloomington. There is a significant amount of work involved in keeping the woods and open space – the reason you moved out here – in good shape so that you can really enjoy them.

One resident described his estate landscape management plan as having three stages. Stage I is the house, lawn, shrubbery and gardens within about 50 feet from the house or other buildings. This area is maintained about as intensively as anyone would in a typical residential area. Mow the lawn, trim the shrubs, plant flowers, fertilize, prune, and control weeds. This area would definitely get watering during a drought.

Stage II is the forest edge. Within stage two the trees are pruned with safety issues in mind and perhaps to frame certain views from near the home. Mowing the grass, if done at all, is directly related to how much rain has fallen. Invasive species such as buckthorn, honeysuckle, burdock, and thistles are aggressively controlled here and FireWise wildfire fuel reduction may be necessary.

Stage III is the forest or the wild meadow further out. The only pruning done here deals with tree safety issues and perhaps tree pruning to reduce the likelihood of a wildfire climbing from the ground into the upper canopy of the forest trees. Perhaps invasive species of seed bearing age will be removed too. This is where the wild things live and it provides the privacy that many of us prefer and is the reason many of us moved to Sunfish Lake.

Going forward with a three-stage plan to manage our woodland is a way to budget our resources and create a beautiful, safe, and welcoming home in our lovely City of Sunfish Lake. These two Minnesota publications may be very useful to you as you develop your woodland management plan: [Beyond the Suburbs, A Land Owner's Guide to Conservation Management, Minnesota DNR, 2001](#) and [Woodland Stewardship, A Practical Guide for Midwestern Landowners, University of Minnesota Extension, 2009.](#)

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