

Treeways

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Woodland Management – Tree Removal

Ever wonder what your neighbor is doing making all that noise with a chainsaw, brush chipper, landscape blower or other noisy equipment? Maybe stopping by to say hello and have a conversation will answer your questions or maybe inspire you to begin a similar project.

Many people like the idea of removing dead and dying trees. So that is probably a good idea, right? If a dead or dying tree was near my house I would definitely take it down and that is a good thing. If the dead tree is out in the woods away from where people live, maybe not, especially if I want to encourage pileated woodpeckers and other wildlife that need standing dead trees to have a reason to hang out nearby. Is dead tree removal good or bad? It depends. By the way, removing more than a couple significant (larger than 6” diameter) live trees within one year may require approval by the City Forester. I’m really easy to connect with since I live in Sunfish Lake and I do evening and weekend consultations.

One of the reasons we all live out here is that we want the freedom to creatively manage our own property in a way we believe will best benefit ourselves and our semi-rural lifestyle. There are always positives and negatives even with projects that are generally seen as good for the community of Sunfish Lake. In some locations 90% or more of the woody vegetation is buckthorn and honeysuckle and I think we can all agree that removal or management of invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle is a good thing to do. However when a “wall of green” buckthorn and honeysuckle is removed, adjacent neighbors, who may not have been able to see each other through the thick “woods” for 20 years, can again look right through the open mature woodland and see each other. Is this good or bad? It depends.

This is the woodland management quandary ... I want to manage my woodland for my benefit and enjoyment ... so what is a reasonable plan? With or without our direct participation our woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and lakes change as time passes. This is called succession. When we do not actively participate with our land, the insects, diseases, storms and invasive species may make our semi-rural paradises into places we do not like and do not enjoy.

I recommend creating and following a woodland and landscape management plan. You and your neighbors could even create a management plan together. Here is the basic process and the significant parts:

1. Define your landscape goals – lawn, pathways, attracting wildlife, using only native plants/trees, minimal maintenance, and a source of firewood? Consider requesting a consultation from the City Forester on anything related to trees or woodlands (a free service available from the City).
2. Create an inventory of your property’s features – species and numbers of trees, soil type and topography, significant wildlife habitat, wetlands, ponds and waterways.

3. Create or obtain a reasonably accurate map of your property.
4. Develop a description of your property management options.
5. Develop an action plan describing what you want to accomplish and when.

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