UPDATE ON NORTHEASTERN NURSERIES

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ABSTRACT: Nursery ownerships and production capacities are widely varied in the Northeastern Area of the USDA Forest Service. Nearly 100 nurseries are producing well over 200 million plants of up to 120 different species each *year.* Land ownership and landowner objectives are also very diverse. While several Stateowned nurseries have closed recently, total nursery production and demand has remained steady.

DEFINITION OF AREA

I must first define the area of the United States that I will he discussing. For the purpose of this paper, the Northeastern Area encompasses 20 States. The northern perimeter begins with Minnesota and includes all States along the Canadian border east to Maine. The perimeter then extends south to Maryland, west to Missouri and north to Minnesota. This area is an administrative unit of the USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry, and is also congruous with the Eastern Region (Region 9) of the National Forest System (fig. 1).

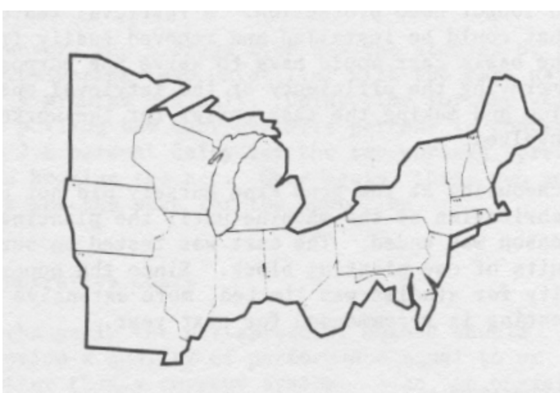

Figure 1.--Northeastern Area of the USDA Forest Service

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NUMBER OF NURSERIES

Within this area there are close to 100 nurseries known to produce plant materials for forestry, reclamation, and conservation purposes. The actual count varies as existing nurseries close or new nurseries come on line. An approximate breakdown of ownership as of August 1984 is:

Ownership	Approx. No. of Nurseries
Private	52
State	27
Forest Industry	8
Federal	5
Soil and Water Conservation District	2

PRODUCT

The last areawide survey of all nurseries producing stock for foresters, reclamation, and conservation purposes was completed in the spring of 1981. Nurseries contacted were asked for their 1980 production, type of production, and area available for production. The results of that survey are outlined in table 1.

More recent data are available for State-owned nurseries. At these nurseries, production varies from a few hundred thousand to over twenty million seedlings per year. Total production from State-owned nurseries averages around 100 million plants per year and seems to be relatively steady at this time. It is interesting to note that most northeastern State nurseries are operating at much lower production (many under half) than they were in the mid 1960's. This is because of the Federal Land Bank program operating at that time.

Presently, the increased interest in reforestation appears to be in the northern most States within our area and is supported primarily by forest industry. The largest advance in production facilities has been in new forest industry nurseries. We are currently aware of seven industry nurseries in the Lake States and Maine. State-owned nurseries have benefited little from this increased demand for seedlings. One reason is that there is currently little or no money available for production expansion.

Table 1.--Nurseries and production in the Northeast (as of 1980)

	Bareroot			Container		
Ownership	Number of Nurseries	Acres of Seedbed	1980 Production (Thousands)	Number of Nurseries	Square Ft. of Growing	1980 Production (Thousands)
Private	52	2,421	108,007	6	179,796	3,024
State	30	1,664	91,381	2	3,280	150
Forest Ind.	2	30	1,250	3	34,560	4,250
Federal	2	120	9,340	3	19,528	0
S&WCD*	2	41	6,750	0	0	0
Totals	88	4,276	216,728	14	237,164	7,424

*S&WCD = Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Private nurseries are also gaining little from this increased production requirement. The reasons are varied and range all the way from some private growers having all the demand they are interested in filling through others not having funds to invest in expansion capital. On the industries' end, they may wish to keep the job in-house so they have more direct control of the product. Another reason for an industry to build its own nursery is to tie seedling production with tree improvement programs in which they are investing. Therefore, as in the southeastern States, forest industries are building and developing their own nurseries to meet most of their own seedling demands.

SPECIES

The list of species grown at State-owned nurseries in the Northeast is lengthy. It changes slightly from year to year but ranges between 110 and 120 species. This includes around 30 species of conifers and about 90 species of hardwoods, shrubs, vines and other species. (Copies of annual production from State-owned nurseries are available from this author. Listings include the species and quantities shipped by each State). Conifers make up over 80 percent of the total volume of seedlings shipped. It is interesting to note that eastern white pine is not the primary conifer produced. It comes in a poor second (16MM) to Norway (red) pine (28MM). White spruce (10MM) is the third most popular. It is also interesting to note that these are all Lake States and New England species. Of the hardwoods, black walnut (2.1MM) and black locust (1.9MM) are in highest demand. Autumn olive (1.7MM) is by far the most popular shrub.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Less than 10 percent of the commercial forest land in the Northeast is in Federal ownership, less than 9 percent is in State ownership, and just over 11 percent is owned by forest industry. Approximately 1.5 percent is owned by Indian nations, counties and municipalities. The remaining 69 percent of all commercial forest land in the Northeast is owned by private nonindustrial forest land owners. This sector is made up of tree farmers, investors, farmers, and others who have varying degrees of experience and interest in managing forest land. There is a sizable portion of land owned by absentee landowners who spend little or no time managing the flora or fauna.

LANDOWNER OBJECTIVES

The objectives of landowners are even more variable than the types of landowners. These range from the tree farmer of the year for 1984 who manages a sugar bush and sells Christmas trees, logs, and other forest products from his 2,000-acre tree farm as his sole source of income to the individual who is holding his land to maintain the forest in its present condition. Woodlots are popular in farms and even small acreages since the energy crunch has raised the appeal of wood heat. Christmas tree plantations are also gaining in popularity as both primary and secondary sources of income.

The increased awareness gained from our environmental movement has popularized managing wooded acres for many values other than the production of wood. Owners often list objectives such as wildlife, general conservation, and esthetics, as the primary objectives for their forest land area. Thus, the reasons citizens order seedlings also vary. The uses for seedlings recognized by various State nurseries and reported by buyers are listed below.

- Timber plantations
- Christmas trees
- Windbreaks and shelterbelts
- General conservation
- Rehabilitation of strip-mined land, old fields, and other disturbed sites
- Street trees for municipalities, DOT's, and other public lands
- Restoration of native vegetation, including production of species on endangered lists

RECENT DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

A. Several nurseries have closed in the past 3 years. These are listed below.

1. Delaware - Two-year moratorium on sowing after nursery waterlines were stolen. Future uncertain.

2. West Virginia - Clemons closed, Parsons remaining open.

3. Ohio - Greensprings closed, Zanesville and Marietta remaining open.

4. Pennsylvania - Mont Alto closed, Greenwood and Penn remaining open.

5. Michigan - Howell (Southern Michigan Nursery) closed. Wyman remaining open.

B. The State of Michigan has stopped production of seedlings for sale to private landowners. They have agreements with private growers to produce quality stock at reasonable prices. They plan to work out some system to distribute improved seed to private growers for the benefit of the private landowner.

C. A large container nursery has opened which uses waste heat from a coal-fired generating plant. This facility is the Itasca Greenhouse at Cohasset, Minnesota. Ted Tower, formerly of the BIA, is the grower-manager.

CURRENT STATUS OF NORTHEASTERN NURSERIES

Overall nursery production has remained stable over the past several years. The closing of facilities mentioned above is really only a readjustment of State-owned nursery capacity after the high volume years of the Federal Landbank Program in the late 1960's. Production from State-owned nurseries is currently about half what it was during those years. The extra nursery capacity had been carried since that time. The recent economic climate made it necessary to shave off some of that capacity in order to economize. Otherwise, State production and sales have remained fairly even through these last few years and appear to remain strong. Private and industry nurseries are increasing in both numbers of facilities and production.

Container production is gaining *very* slowly and this is almost totally in industry-owned facilities. The few Federal , State, and privately owned container facilities are remaining quite stable with no newly planned facilities known at this time.