

Forestry Field Days

Three-fifths of our commercial forest land is owned by more than 4 million people. These woodlands average 71 acres in size and produce at only 48% of their potential.

Forest owners are a diverse group and often exhibit little interest in their woodlands. Attempts to enhance the management on private forestry lands face two problems: (1) how to get an audience receptive to woodland management and (2) how to convey understandable basic forest management concepts to the audience. One solution has been field days where education and entertainment are combined. The entertainment draws the public, and natural resource specialists have the opportunity to speak to a large number of people.

Several factors influence the success of a field day. Choose the subject you want to stress—woodland management, Christmas trees, windbreaks, or wildlife, and the audience you want to attract—the general public, farmers, absentee landowners.

A good field day requires so much preparation that a well-organized planning

group is essential. Subcommittees arrange specific parts and a coordinator ensures that the parts fit together. Choose a location that offers the facilities you need, such as proper forest conditions for tours and buildings for displays. An accessible location and adequate parking are essential.

Field days that are major community events attract many people. People are attracted by new and unusual equipment, especially if it moves and has a sound track. They're interested in how their grandfather split shingles and made maple syrup or sassafras tea. Those who don't go on the tour at least see some aspect of forestry, and go home thinking about woodland management.

Schedule the field day to minimize conflicts with other events. Farm planting and harvesting seasons and days when there are competing athletic events are inappropriate times. Saturdays are good; however, nature tours on Sundays and industrial tours during the week have been successful. Weather permitting, field days held in late winter can be very



