



Managing Ohio's Non-Timber Forest Resources

Impact Statement 2021

INVESTIGATORS

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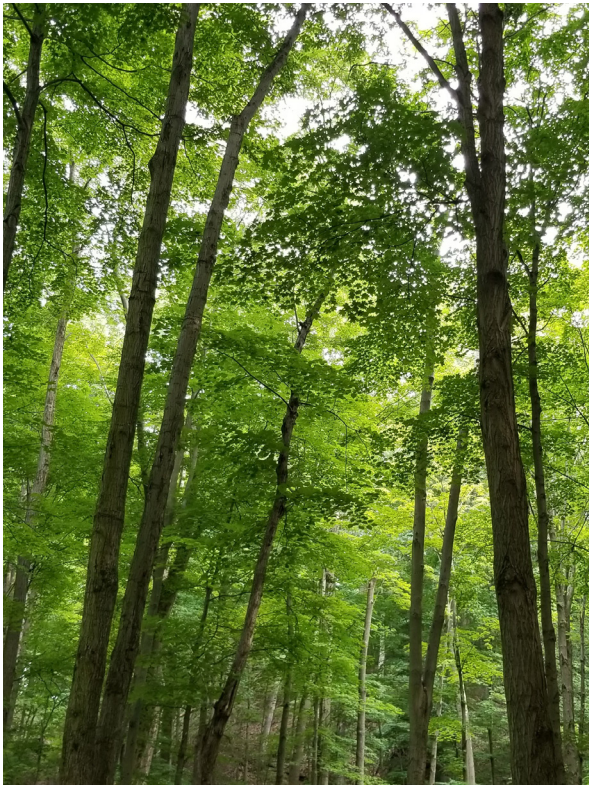
SUMMARY

Non-timber forest products offer Ohio woodland owners a diverse suite of management options and income opportunities that can be integrated with timber production and recreational use of forests. Non-timber forest products thus provide unique opportunities to create additional value from forests through marketing of edible fungi, native fruits, and maple syrup. Management for co-production of non-timber and timber forest products can lead to both economic and ecological win-wins for forest owners.

SITUATION

Ohio has nearly 8 million acres of forest land, most of which is privately-owned. Healthy forests support over 124,000 jobs in Ohio's \$12 billion forest products industry. Thousands of additional Ohio landowners derive some or all of their annual income from non-timber forest products. Exponentially more Ohioans take to the woods to cut down their own Christmas tree, search for pawpaws, or tap a single maple or two in their backyard as a hobby or recreational pursuit – all activities with deep cultural importance. Woodland and forests are also used for livestock production systems through silvo-pastoralism and conservation grazing. As challenges mount for rural Ohioans to retain and restore their forested land ownerships, identifying and enhancing forest income streams is paramount to offset management costs.





RESPONSE

The diversity of non-timber forest products is reflected in a wide scope of the School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR) research and extension work: A working sugarbush at Ohio State Mansfield provides a hub for maple research and best practice outreach; Large-scale pawpaw orchards and managed woodlands in Waterman Farm in Columbus and The Ohio State University South Centers Piketon anchor production system, fruit quality and market development research and extension supported by State and Federal grants exceeding \$1.5M; Experiments assess the role of meat goats for conservation grazing to control woody invasive species at the Pomerene Forest; Proprietary Canaan fir seed from University plantations support Christmas tree growers across North America. We also assess long-term sustainability, economic status, and best practice implementation for multiple non-timber forest product industries.

IMPACT

Our work supports local, state and federal initiatives to manage for non-timber forest products. Ohio State's maple program launched an Ohio State maple website, formed the OH-PA-WV tri-state "Southern Tier" collaborative, and is offers annual Ohio Maple Days. Studies target additional maple species (not sugar maple) for production to incorporate industry-wide climate change resilience. Hands-on student experience has been a recurring highlight of the maple work. Ohio State continues to support the Ohio Christmas Tree Growers Association. The pawpaw team at Ohio State is engaged with growers, nurseries, fruit buyers and value-added product industries (e.g. beer and ice cream), reaching hundreds of commercial growers and thousands of other stakeholders through webinars, field days and instructional videos. As a result the acreage of pawpaw production in Ohio has increased and tree and fruit producers are seeing demand outstrip supply. Woodland Stewards offers in-person workshops, publications, and other documentation across the non-timber forest products space, including an every-other-Friday "Escape to the Forest" webinar (~4,000 attendees in 2021). The work has documented the unique and diverse contributions that forests make to the state's economy, leading to greater public and private support for this important sector.

CONTACT

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