

Valley Ponderosa Pine

GLENN AHRENS, OSU Extension Forestry and Natural Resources

Willamette Valley Ponderosa pine is an important component of Valley woodland ecosystems. It can be the only conifer species suitable for planting on some of the too-wet/too-dry soil situations that are marginal for Douglas-fir around the Willamette Valley. Attendees at the Willamette Valley Ponderosa Pine Conservation and Management program learned about Valley pine management in the field and in class at the Oregon Garden, September 17.

Key aspects of successful pine planting were illustrated on the field tour. The eight year old demonstration planting of Valley pines were planted in a pure stand, and in mixture with oak or mixed/conifers on a dry, somewhat rocky south-facing slope. Aggressive site preparation treatments on blackberry, scotch broom, and grasses, along with continued weed management resulted in good survival and growth. Pruning is underway and thinning treatments are being considered. Bob McNitt (past WVPPCA Director and Pine enthusiast) and Julie Woodward (Forest Education Program Manager, Oregon Forest Resources Institute) led the tour of this demonstration area, which they established in the Rediscovery Forest at the Oregon Garden in 2004 (with lots of help from dedicated volunteers). To take your own tour, visit the Rediscovery Forest at the Oregon Garden at this website: <http://www.oregongarden.org/gardens/rediscovery-forest/>

After the field tour, an engaging presentation and discussion was led by Mike Barsotti, Executive Director of the Willamette Valley Ponderosa Pine Conservation Association (WVPPCA). Mike told the story of the Association, which was formed nearly 20 years ago to conserve and reestablish Willamette



Taking a tour of the Valley pine demonstration planting at the Oregon Garden.

Valley ponderosa pine for the sake of genetic conservation and future timber, wildlife and urban uses. The Association has produced a great amount of useful information and led the development of sound practices involving seed collection, seedling production, plantation establishment, and stand management.

Another key aspect of pine management includes diseases and insects, which provide an evolving situation as the area of plantations increases. Currently, the California five-spined Ips beetle is the most common threat. Careful attention to slash clean-up and weather damage is key to reducing the beetle threat. You can find more at this website: http://www.westernforestry.org/wvppca/2010/bark_beetle_study.htm

Growing interest in Valley pine has been reflected in expansion of the seed collection and seedling production effort (supporting widespread planting of pine in the 1990's and 2000's. With the lull in timber-related activity through the recession, seedling production and planting of pine dwindled over the last five years. Questions about future markets for pine logs also loom on the horizon as growers anticipate log sales from maturing pine stands. But a niche for Valley pine in both the woodland environment and in woodland management is now

clear. And with some economic recovery underway, we should renew our efforts to learn about and demonstrate successful practices with Valley pine.

If you are interested in learning more about Valley pine, start with a visit to the WVPPCA website, which provides a wealth of information about all aspects of Valley pine establishment and management <http://www.westernforestry.org/wvppca/>. ■