



FOREST-TREE LEADER

Clackamas County
Farm Forestry Association, Inc.

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CCFFA President's Corner

Wildlings

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If you are in need of seedlings, this year will be one of the most difficult years to locate them. With a strong log market, there have been more people logging this last year than the nurseries were expecting. If you find yourself unable to locate seedlings from a nursery, you might consider digging up seedlings (wildlings) from your property.

On our tree farm we have finished with large plantings and now only plant small pockets at a time. Clearing unwanted vegetation and clearing small areas infected with root rot are prime examples. There are several ways to transplant wildlings; however, I'm going to focus on the way I have had the most success.

When choosing wildlings to dig up and transplant, I like to find one to two year old wildlings and am careful to transplant them when they are dormant. January and February are optimal months to do this. I transplant the wildlings straight into one gallon nursery pots using as much soil from the original location as possible. Next, the pots are moved into our garden where they are placed tightly together to protect them from freezing. They will remain there until they are ready to be planted. During the growing season the seedlings are watered regularly, and fertilized occasionally. One of the biggest reasons we grow our seedlings

in our garden is to protect them from deer and elk. We have tried this process outside of the garden fence only to watch all of our hard work literally disappear once the wildlings are found by the deer and elk.

Wildlings are ready to be planted the following winter. I can usually put twenty or so pots on my four-wheeler and head down to my planting area. The trees plant quite easily. Simply slide the tree from the pot and place it in the ground once your hole is dug. It's kind of like planting a giant plug. I also don't have to worry about "J rooting". I can't remember the last time a tree didn't survive this method.

I have often found myself with extra potted wildlings after all areas have been planted. To keep these seedlings for the following planting season, they need to be transferred to a larger pot. I have been using two to three gallon pots for room to grow for the following year. Once they are in the larger pots it makes handling them the next year quite a bit harder. I can only fit a few of the larger trees on my four-wheeler. The pots are a lot heavier and the hole needs to be substantially larger for this size of wildling. I have grown some of the seedlings, mostly Western Red Cedars, in the larger pots to over six feet. The only plus to all the work it takes to get the tree that big is that I don't have to protect them from browse. I'm still experimenting with this method so I can't claim success yet.

We really enjoy using the seedlings from our property. We used to plant several thousand bare root seedlings a

year, but in recent years that has decreased to maybe a hundred or so. For us, that makes it practical to "grow our own". It's a lot of work to pot the wildlings and we couldn't imagine trying to pot several thousand a year. Hopefully you can find as much pleasure and success as we have with our wildlings. ■