

CCFFA Twilight Educational Tour—Cedar Creek Tree Farm

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On the 10th of July, the CCFFA/ OSU Extension Forestry Educational Twilight Tour arrived at the front gate of Cedar Creek Tree Farm on Windy City Rd. in the Clarkes area. The owners, Gary and Beverly Bush, were 2013 Tree Farmer of the year nominees. About 20 CCFFA members and guests made up the contingent and prior to the actual tour, an orientation and some history was passed along by Gary. The farm is a typical mixed use property for this part of Clackamas County: a combination of livestock operation, woodlot and Christmas trees. The property ownership goes back a generation and through a trust, will carry into a 3rd generation. The property is 72 acres; 47 acres of woodlands, 18 acres of Christmas tree plantation, with the remaining seven acres being used for their small livestock operation.

The property has good access by road and improved trails and once we got everyone loaded up we moved out to our first stop, a Doug-fir stand last thinned in 2013. Gary explained how decisions were made on which trees to take and which to leave. The crowns, while still touching, have plenty of room to grow



Gary Bush pointing out riparian area and stand of western redcedars that are to be protected.

without constriction and Mother Nature is taking care of the limb lift removal on the 120 ft. tall trees. Understory cleanup was done with little stand damage noticeable.

Our next stop was at the Little Cedar Creek crossing. There we were able to enjoy the cool shade of the Western redcedars along the riparian area while Gary explained the history of the cedar grove, beginning with the retention of the cedars during logging operations in 1959. At that time, there was little, if any, market for cedar other than for shingles and fence posts. What they have now is a 100+ year old stand of cedars and

the decision has been made that it will remain a protected area for as long as they own the property.

We found their Christmas tree plantations spread out amongst the various sections of their woodlands. Half of their plantations are Noble fir, with the remainder made up of Doug & Grand fir and some Noregren Spruce. With the market slow-down a few years back, they found a niche for table-top sized Nobles and they have been able to pump up the revenue a little with those sales.

We also observed their use of Roundup tolerant grasses. The original 1/4 acre test site has now spread



Gary Bush explains integrating Christmas trees into recovering tree plantation.



Glenn Ahrens fielding questions on the issue of forest certification during the Cedar Creek Tree Farm Twilight Tour.

to eight acres in their Noble plantation. The goals are reduced mud and compaction, cleaner harvest operations, and a way to provide a cover crop for rotation periods. The results, after a couple of seasons, have been promising. It does require a little mowing for those people who enjoy doing such things.

We toured 12 and 13 year old stands of Doug-fir and Gary expressed his thoughts on pre-commercial thinning. A lively discussion followed and carried over into a review of their latest harvest; a three acre plot that they replanted with 1800 Doug-fir seedlings.

Not to try and hide an “oops,” Gary showed us to a two acre area where the ever-prevalent blackberry bushes have over-grown a 6-year Doug-fir re-plant. His explanation was that he got sidetracked by other projects and suddenly the 15 feet tall berry vines just appeared; if you looked real close, you could see a fir top here and there. Other than hard manual labor, suggestions of articulated chain mowers, DR Manufacturing’s brush chopper, etc. were put forth to help remove the blackberries. I’m sure that he is the only one with this type of problem. Right?

The tour was followed by a question and answer period with a discussion on the value of having one’s timberland certified by one of the recognized certification groups. Glenn

Ahrens offered his knowledge on the subject as did John Poppino. While the discussions continued, we all enjoyed a watermelon feast and some of Bev’s raspberry topped brownie treats.

All-in-all it was a good educational effort and we want to thank the

Bush’s for taking the time to show off their hard work and for providing some insight into their operations.

We look forward to seeing you at the next twilight tour. Check the CCFFA website (ccffa.com) for the next event and for any additions and updates. ■



Gary Bush provides history of Cedar Creek Tree Farm for CCFFA Twilight Tour attendees.



Refreshments and discussion following the Cedar Creek Tree Farm Tour.