



NORTHERN HARDWOOD NOTES

Management Methods And Silvicultural Systems: What Are They?

Terminology has often hindered rather than helped in the understanding of northern hardwood management. We have found that even among practicing professional foresters in the same part of a State, terms such as “management methods” and “silvicultural systems” mean different things to different individuals. This confusion is even worse between regions, where, besides personal interpretations, climates and species requirements are different. Here is how we have used and interpreted two important terms used in these Notes.

Management Method

“Management method,” although commonly used, is something of a misnomer. We prefer to think of the even-age “method” and the all-age (or uneven-age) “method” not so much as methods, which imply action, but as long-range goals-attaining a stand with trees of the same age, or of different ages. Compatible terms would be “even-sized” or “all-sized” in regard to both diameter and height. We achieve the goal or condition of an “even-aged” or “all-aged” stand by manipulating (cutting) the stand. That’s where the “silvicultural system” comes in.

Silvicultural System

These are the methods of cutting to achieve or maintain a management “method” (read “goal”). Two silvicultural systems, shelterwood and clearcutting, are recommended for achieving even-age management in the Lake States. They get their name from the type of cutting used at the *end* of the rotation to secure regeneration. All the cuttings made *before* the regeneration period, although they are still part of the “clearcutting silvicultural system” or the “shelterwood silvicultural system,” are simply called “intermediate cuttings” and are identical. A third silvicultural system for even-age management, the seed-tree method, is not recommended for northern hardwoods.

In all-age management, the name of the silvicultural system is based on the cutting pattern; for example “single tree selection” and “group selection”. Single tree selection is the only silvicultural system we recommend for all-age management of northern hardwoods.

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