

The NORTHEAST TIMBER GROWING CONTEST

Why should I enter?

Phil Walton

I am not a competitive person. I set personal goals, enjoy learning new skills, but don't try to best others, i.e., contests generally aren't for me. When the timber growing contest was posted on the NY Forest Owners Association's (NYFOA's) website three years ago, I read the rule book and my eyes glazed. But I have changed my mind about this contest!

At the NYFOA membership meeting in April, Dave Williams of the Southern Tier Chapter offered to meet Ron Pedersen and me at Ron's Deposit, NY farm to learn what the contest is all about. Dave brought with him the needed tools, blank tally sheets, and enthusiasm. After some collaboration in the woods, Ron quickly decided to enter the basal area increment category for hardwoods, one of six in the rule book. In a short time Dave had three plots established and Ron and I were busy tagging and identifying species, then taking initial diameter measurements of all trees over 6 inches dbh within the three ¼ acre plots. (I count this New Skill #1).



Once back home, the diameter data is plugged into an online program to compute basal area, and the results plotted on a Northern Hardwoods Stocking Chart to find out just how overstocked the plots are. You will most likely be shocked! If your forester happens to be available, get recommendations for thinning for best growth. Otherwise use your best judgment to select and remove the UGS (undesirable growing stock). As woodland owners we constantly thin, but rarely with the application of science. (Applying science to woodlot thinning: New Skill #2).

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The contest rules require using soil maps to determine a site index from the Forestland Productivity charts. The maps are found at your local Soil and Water Conservation District or online through the Web Soil Survey. This index creates for contest entrants an equal playing field, a handicapping system to account for variability in soil productivity, one property to the next. (Learning about the vast information included in the County Soil Surveys: New Skill #3).

The field component is simple enough to include children and grandchildren and just might be a hook to get them involved in understanding the importance of caring for your woods. Taking measurements annually will get them outdoors with us to realize we can make a difference in what we do in the forest! (Benefit #4).

After helping Ron with his property, I entered too. **I'd like to help you enter also.** Using my NYFOA member discounts (the NYFOA *Rewards* Program) I have available the necessary tags, etc. to get your plots marked and your property entered into the contest. Email me at pw Walton518@gmail.com and we can talk more about getting involved. I don't expect to win my category, but I got into the woods, learned lots, and had fun.

For more information on NYFOA *Rewards*, NYFOA's discount program, please visit the Membership Information page at NYFOA.org

<http://www.nyfoa.org/>

For more information on the Northeast Timber Growing Contest, please visit

www.timbercontest.com.