



# STEWARDS OF THE LAND

*A publication for owners of land conserved with the Vermont Land Trust*

Winter 2009

Vermont Land Trust | 8 Bailey Avenue | Montpelier, Vermont 05602 | (802) 223-5234

## Firewood: Energy from the Forest

By JON HALPIN

Last winter's explosion in energy costs left Vermonters scrambling to find cheaper alternatives to heat their homes. The summer saw unprecedented sales of wood and pellet stoves, and demand for wood rose accordingly.

Markus Bradley, a forester with

Redstart Forestry, described the firewood market as being in turmoil this year. "Last winter's high oil prices really got the firewood market rolling this summer," he said. A cord of green wood, split and delivered, cost \$190-\$230, up from an average of around \$160 a couple years ago. With oil prices and the price of pulp both falling this autumn, the constraints on firewood affordability have eased up. Markus projects that firewood might be around \$170 a green cord this coming summer.

Woodlot owners can, of course, harvest their own fuel in the form of firewood and not be subject to market fluctuations.

Lee Kauppila of Monkton uses five cords a year. In 2007, Lee became a member-owner of Little Hogback Community Forest in Monkton, a VLT



Jonathan Blake

Lee Kauppila cutting firewood in Monkton at the Little Hogback Community Forest.

and Vermont Family Forest project that makes forestland affordable to Vermonters who might not otherwise be able to own forestland. Little Hogback landowners buy shares in the land and manage it in common. Lee was able to purchase the sixteenth, and final, share.

For Lee, this year's harvest started by walking his lot with a forester and marking the trees to cut. As they walked the woods he kept a tally sheet, taking note of the number of 6", 8", or 10" diameter trees selected for cutting.

According to Pieter van Loon, VLT stewardship forester, 10 acres allow for the removal of between three to five cords a year (20-30 trees) at a sustained rate. He cautioned that landowners planning on cutting their own wood should hire a forester who can help them plan which trees to cultivate and which to cut. "The biggest mistake I've seen

is landowners cutting potential crop trees for firewood now," said Pieter. "A good idea is to try and find crop trees and release them by cutting the trees around them on two or three sides. Take out the lower quality ones."

Among trees to be marked to be cut are those that are crooked, dead, diseased, partially rotten, or are in some way inferior to crop trees. Crop trees need space, so clearing out around them reduces density and promotes growth. But not all trees that fall into those categories should be cut. "We're mindful of creating a diverse habitat," said Lee. "We're going to leave certain dead or dying trees for woodpeckers and we're not taking out all the beech because they produce nuts."

Additionally, tops and branches can be piled to create habitat for small mammals and birds. Care must be taken with the removal of the trees, so as to minimize accidental damage

to remaining trees. Dragging cut trees can impact standing trees by scraping off their bark, and skidding logs when the ground is soft can result in soil rutting and compaction and damage to tree roots.

Pieter recommends the

	Estimated million BTU per cord
Sugar Maple . . . . .	29
Beech . . . . .	27.8
Red Oak . . . . .	27.3
Yellow Birch . . . . .	26.2
White Ash . . . . .	25
Tamarack . . . . .	24
Paper (White) Birch . . . . .	23.4
Black Cherry . . . . .	23.5
Red Maple . . . . .	24
Aspen . . . . .	18
Eastern White Pine . . . . .	17.1

*continued on page 2*



# Vermont Land Trust

CONSERVING LAND FOR THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

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## Firewood

*continued from page 1*

Game of Logging chainsaw course to teach chainsaw safety and technique: “Felling trees is a really dangerous business.” Lee concurred: “I’ve been cutting trees all my life,” he said, “but this course taught me new styles of cutting I use now.”

“Owners of conserved land can cut firewood for personal use without a forest management plan,” said Pieter. “However those landowners enrolled in the Current Use program and owners of conserved land who want to sell firewood commercially need to be in conformance with their forest management plan.”

With four cords stacked in his woodpile, Lee is happy with the solution to his firewood need: “I have a sense of stewardship for this land. Firewood harvesting is improving this forest.”

## New Publication for Vermont Landowners

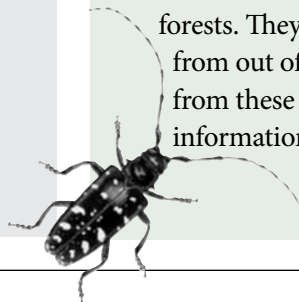
“A Place Called Home,” published by *Northern Woodlands Magazine* offers Vermont landowners essential information for taking care of their land and getting the most out of it. Contact VLT for a free copy or visit: <http://northernwoodlands.org>.

## For Essex and Caledonia County Forestland Owners

The Northern Vermont Resource Conservation & Development Council is holding a “forestry letter series” to educate forestland owners about ecosystems, habitat, and management issues. Participants will receive six informational mailings and can attend an educational field day. The sign up cost is \$30 and the deadline is February 19. Contact info: (802) 828-4595 or [beth\\_ann.finlay@vt.usda.gov](mailto:beth_ann.finlay@vt.usda.gov).

## Out-of-state firewood is threatening Vermont’s forests!

The emerald ash borer and the Asian long-horned beetle are within 50 miles of Vermont’s borders. These destructive invasive insects have killed tens of millions of trees in other states and are a serious threat to Vermont’s forests. They often “hitchhike” on firewood. Do not import any firewood from out of state (particularly MA and Canada) and if you have firewood from these areas at your home, burn it as soon as possible. For more information and pictures of the pests visit: [www.vtfrp.org/Firewood](http://www.vtfrp.org/Firewood).



Asian long-horned beetle (.75-1” long)