

# Develop your vision for your backyard woods

## In Your Backyard Woods

**P**icture this: You're lying in a hammock on a warm October day. Nearby, a fall colored tree explodes with migrating birds gorging themselves on



Larry Lefever/Grant Heliman Photography

abundant fruit. Farther out in your yard, a mixture of maple and oak trees warms the sky with its hues of orange and brown. A sudden snap of twigs alerts you to three deer moving at the edge of your woods. Before you fall into your afternoon nap, you glimpse the firewood you cut this morning, stacked and ready to chase the chill from the coming winter.

A dream? Not really. But you'll need to tend your backyard woods to get results like this. A plan will help you focus on what is truly important to you and your family. It will also help you organize the work so that it's manageable and fits your budget and available time.



### Getting Started

Before you start to alter your woods, sit down and talk with your family. Discuss questions such as these:

- Why do we have this land?
- What do we like about it?

- What things do we want it to produce?
- What do we want it to look like in 5, 10, or 20 years?

The answers will help you develop a vision for your backyard woods. The more focused you are, the easier it will be to identify activities that will help you meet your objectives. Remember, your woods change overtime like all living things.

### Next Steps

Your backyard woods plan should yield a list of actions to take to reach your goals; however, you don't have to figure out how to

do everything yourself. There are many local forestry related organizations you can contact for information.



Kevin Dodge, Masterfile

*Whatever you do, have fun doing it. Include your family and your neighbors, if possible. A large task is easier with partners!*

There are many resources to help you find out more about land management. Read and use this publication along with the companion Backyard Woods Tip Sheets. Access our Web site at [www.arboday.org/backyardwoods](http://www.arboday.org/backyardwoods). You can contact your local Cooperative Extension Service, County Conservation District, Master Woodland Manager Program, Woodland Owners Association, Woodland Owners Cooperative, State Division of Forestry, or look in your phone book for forestry, tree services, or other similar local organizations for more information and assistance about trees or land management.



*Talk with your neighbors about working together to have a natural resource professional look over your properties.*



Dennis Haugen

*When you're cutting firewood, you are also producing fuel, thinning your woods, making brush piles for rabbits, and probably enjoying the outdoor exercise!*

### Did You Know . . . ?

Today, the United States has the same amount of forest land as it did in 1920.



### In the Forest

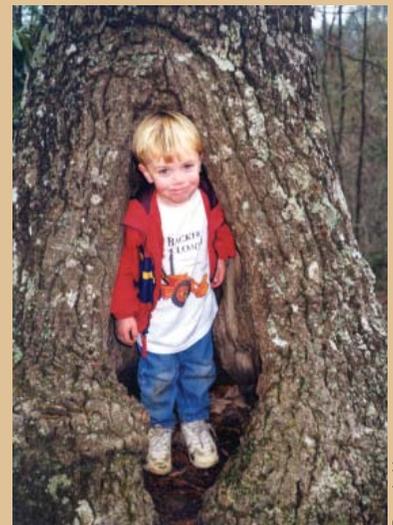
Foresters plan how to manage public and private lands. Developing a forest land plan requires time, patience, and compromise. A good forest plan considers objectives of all of the users and the entire forest community. For example, the USDA Forest Service produces plans for national forests on a 10-year cycle. The process involves local communities, national organizations, public hearings, and written comments. These plans consider public safety, wildfire protection, recreation, forest health, wildlife, water, tree growth, special forest products, and wood products. You may consider many of these factors in planning to meet your objectives for your backyard woods.

### Family Activity: Taking a Trail Tour

Children love to help parents or other adults make plans. They may decide that your woods needs a large swing set in the shape of a rocket, or a series of secret tunnels underground. (Well, no one ever said such ideas were practical!) But children have their own ideas of how your woods and yard should look and what they should be used for. After all, it's their backyard woods, too.

Involve children early in the planning process by taking them on a trail tour. Your goal is to help them get comfortable with and learn about nature. As you hike, stop to look at the things that make nature so exciting—cones, bones, feathers, mushrooms, flowers, and rocks. Share a sense of wonder and curiosity. And the best part is, you don't have to know what everything is. Speculate! Use field guides and Web sites to chase down information about some of your more intriguing finds. (Field guides can be found in libraries, bookstores, and on Web sites.)

Soon, your whole family will be able to share in the planning process to shape a woods that harbors many amazing things!



Dennis Haugen



Dave Powell  
www.forestryimages.org