



# NORTHERN HARDWOOD NOTES

## Strip Cutting In Northern Hardwoods

Interest in clearcutting young northern hardwood stands in strips is running high, especially now that mechanical fellers and skidders have been developed to harvest these stands. Strip cutting has several advantages-no overstory to worry about when treating the site, no overstory to remove later, and the economic advantage of cutting the strip only once.

Just how good an even-age management technique is strip cutting? Experience with strip cuttings in second-growth stands since 1951 has been discouraging. The 1 -to 2-chain-wide strips have been poorly and irregularly stocked. Preferred species have not regenerated well and few quality trees have developed.

Why? Two of the three essentials for even-age management have been missing-suitable overstory and seedbed. Regeneration did not become established on the most exposed sites. Hot, dry periods took a heavy toll. Sprouts and wolf trees developed.

But strip cutting still has potential. Mechanized equipment now cuts strips that are less than half-a-tree-height wide. Strips can be cut in any direction to serve as roads for intermediate cuttings. Skidding patterns can be designed to minimize damage to residual trees. This will improve both regeneration and maintain the quality of residual trees. At best, though, strip cuttings will regenerate mostly even-aged sugar maple. Few light-seeded species (birch, hemlock) will regenerate even though they are present in the overstory.

Until we learn more about it, use strip cutting only as a way to get access for the first thinning in sapling and pole stands. Strip cuts will encourage the overstory to develop. Then more uniform thinning can be used later in the rotation.

## Reference

Metzger, F. T. Strip clearcutting to regenerate northern hardwoods. Res. Pap. NC-186. St. Paul, MN: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Forest Experiment Station; 1980. 14 p.

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