

What is a Woodland and Why Do I Want One?

Prepared by Rachel Baits and Edward Cope

What is a woodland?¹

- Commonly interchangeable with the term “forest”
 - More precisely a forest with an open canopy (the tallest layer of a woodland)
- Open canopies let sunlight into the lower parts of the woodland
 - See image below²
- Woodlands can function as a transition zone between other ecosystems



What is the “edge effect”?⁴

- The edge is where the woodland transitions into an open area, like a prairie or savanna
- The flora and fauna change at the edge of the woodland
- Many species prefer the edge of a woodland to the middle of a woodland for reasons like protection, food availability, and light
- The edge of a woodland is typically more productive for wildlife than anywhere else on the landscape

Why are wildfires important?³

The role of fire

- Many species take advantage of fires for growth
- Helps to clear dead wood and allow for new vegetation to grow
- A natural cycle in forest health
 - In healthy woodlands, low to moderate intensity fires should occur every 3 to 5 years.

Stem density is too high today

- Historically, the canopies of our woodlands would have been 80-90% closed (40-60 trees per acre). Today, with almost two centuries of fire suppression, the majority of our woodlands have become overgrown and too shady (100+ trees per acre).
- Certain species, including some trees, cannot regenerate under these overcrowded conditions



Dominant tree species

Upland/Lowland: Oak



Upland: Hickory



Lowland: Maple



Common invasive species

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*)⁵

- Invasive honeysuckle grows as shrubs; native honeysuckles grow as vines
- Native to Asia and Western Europe
- See images below



Buckthorn (*Rhamnus spp.*)⁶

- Native to Eurasia
- Produce a fruit eaten by birds
- Shrubs will readily resprout from cut or damaged stems
- See images below⁷



Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)⁸

- Smells like garlic
- Small white flowers on a 2-4 ft. stalk
- Blooms in May
- See images below⁹



Resources

1. <http://nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/woodland/>
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland>
3. <http://enviroliteracy.org/land-use/forests/forest-fires/>
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland_edge
5. <http://www.inhs.illinois.edu/research/vmg/bhnysckl/>
6. <http://www.inhs.illinois.edu/research/vmg/buckthorn/>
7. <http://forestry.ohiodnr.gov/buckthorn>
8. <http://www.inhs.illinois.edu/research/vmg/gmustard/>
9. [http://weedwise.conservationdistrict.org/alpe4#lightbox\[gallery-2\]/4/](http://weedwise.conservationdistrict.org/alpe4#lightbox[gallery-2]/4/)