

## OUTLOOK FOR SEEDLING DEMAND

LeRoy Jones, Program Leader  
U.S. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.

Interest in tree planting is strong. The public probably has never had, or shown such a high interest in tree planting as they are at present. Many of us have seen, or remember, large tree planting programs. In fact, tree planting has had a tendency to run in cycles. The first tree planting programs were connected with the establishment of Arbor Day in 1872. The 100th anniversary of Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska this year. Many millions of trees were planted in the depression era by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Then we have had conservation projects such as the Yazoo-Little Tallahatchie project in Mississippi, which has planted almost 600,000,000 seedlings since 1948.

The Soil Bank program of the Eisenhower administration helped get a lot of trees planted, as many of you know from the important role you had in the program. The Rural Environmental Assistance Program (old ACP Program) has helped to plant about 5,000,000 acres to trees. The intent of this program is good, but the makeup of the committee, and the priorities they establish, do not generally favor tree planting. In 1971, only 5.2 percent of the funds were directed toward forestry practices. There are exceptions. Alabama merits special mention because this past year the REAP committee in Alabama directed over \$1 million to forestry practices.

I've mentioned some of the peak tree planting eras because of their great significance in arousing the public's interest in tree planting. Also, history points out that major tree planting programs don't just happen. Some type of assistance or incentive is needed--especially for private landowners. We'll talk about incentives later.

Now, let's review the trend of planting in relation to number of acres needing complete or partial planting. Actually, the "back-log" has been reduced very little over the past 50 years. In 1924, the United States House of Representatives held hearings on the country's reforestation needs. Congressman Clarke introduced a bill to provide for the protection of forest land, for the reforestation of denuded areas, and for other purposes stated. He stated "... it is worthy of note that there are 81 million acres of denuded land in the U.S. now subject to reforestation and fit for reforestation...". This bill was passed and is known to us as the Clarke-McNary

Program, or CM-4 as we know the nursery part of it. Up until that time, we had planted only 1.6 million acres--which is slightly more than our present annual planting rate.

In 1960, the Forest Service reported to the 5th World Forestry Congress that 52 million acres of small (5,000 acres or less), private forests needed planting by 1970 in order to meet national wood requirements by the year 2,000. Only 7,057,100 acres were planted or seeded from July 1, 1958 to June 30, 1970--far below the target!

The 1967 Crop Needs Inventory reports that 104 million acres of non-Federal forest land need re-establishment or reinforcement of timber stands by planting or natural regeneration. To place this figure in the right perspective, we must consider the reinforcement category which accounts for most of the figure. It is still estimated that over 50 million acres need planting. Some of this, of course, is conversion of less desirable species to species of better quality. The "Forest Survey" is updating estimates that are very detailed for some States, and we hope to get a better handle on data to establish planting goals.

The "South's Third Forest" report projects a 30 million acre pine regeneration job in the South alone. To accomplish this job, we would have to produce about 20 billion seedlings! One-third of this is bare land, and two-thirds is land needing conversion of low-quality oak-hickory.

More trees are being planted as a result of shorter rotations, because it affords an opportunity to utilize genetically improved planting stock, and often planting is necessary if full stocking is to be obtained. Also, as said so often now, we must produce more-and-more wood on less-and-less land, if the nation's needs are to be met.

The recent acceleration of prices of plywood and timber has spurred more activity in the President's office to producing more wood for housing and other uses without a big increase in prices.

In addition to the projected needs for wood products, the public appears to be in the mood to support tree planting. Tree planting in parks, establishment of green belts, more trees in cities, trees of noise and pollution abatement, recreation, beauty, oxygen, and for general environmental enhancement. Actually, there appears to be an increase in tree planting activities. Boy Scouts and other youth groups are supporting

and participating in tree planting projects. Companies are sponsoring "Plant A Tree" campaigns such as the Hunt-Wesson program, where a person sends in a label from their product and a tree will be planted in the individual's name. This has provided for the cost to plant 1.5 million trees. Many other companies have, or are interested in, similar programs. You may recently have seen the Datsun ad on T.V. which also has such a program now. Several other organizations and associations are planning tree planting programs to celebrate the American Revolution Bicentennial in 1976. The American Forestry Association is sponsoring a "National Tree Planting Conference" in New Orleans this fall, at which they expect over 2,000 people to attend--including Governors, several U.S. Senators and Congressmen, Forest Industry, and conservation and forestry leaders. Part of the purpose for this conference is to set the stage and establish goals and begin action to make all the nation's commercial forest land productive and to enhance the environment with trees.

I saw a note the other day which illustrates the public interest in tree planting in other parts of the world. In Belgrade, Yugoslavia, a suggestion was made to set up a "Newlywed's Park". After each wedding at a registry office, the couple would plant a tree in the park. Boy Scouts would help and provide instruction about planting and care. Then, suggestions came forth for modification or expansion. The already-marrieds wanted a tree in the park--so why not celebrate their 30th anniversary by planting a tree. Next, came the hotel involvement. They would reduce prices to those who came to plant a tree--and so it goes!

Well, tree planting is receiving a lot of attention and talk. "But", you may ask, "how many acres will all of this hullabaloo get planted? I've heard talk about big tree planting programs before!" The U.S. Forest Service has developed and promoted comprehensive proposals since the mid-50's. We were, however, unable to get the necessary involvement. But now--Congress, industry, and the private sector are all favorably impressed with the idea of a major tree planting program.

It is generally understood that a major cost-sharing program for forestry practices is the incentive needed to get trees in the ground. This may come to pass. Recently, a "Forestry Incentives" bill was introduced in the Senate and House. The bill has passed the Senate, but the House Agriculture and Forestry Committee is still deliberating on certain phases of

it. The bill would authorize the Secretary to carry out a comprehensive program of financial incentives for the application of forestry practices by small non-industrial private and non-Federal public forest landowners. As proposed, the bill would authorize a categorical grant program for forestry practices. Tree planting would be a major practice. The program would be handled similar to the Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP), except the program would be entirely oriented toward production--with ALL funds devoted to forestry practices. Leadership for the Incentives Program would be vested in the Forest Service, supported by sister agencies in the Department. The State Forester would be the key man in each State--writing program guidelines in consultation with State and Federal agencies.

Congress passed legislation in April which authorizes the Forest Service and the State Forestry agencies to provide technical assistance to urban and community forestry. I'm sure this program will indirectly create an increase in demand for tree seedlings, as more emphasis will be placed on planting trees in urban and community areas. It will also serve as a means of communication to the absentee forest landowner who may have land that needs planting to trees.

Now--how does this affect you as a nurseryman? Most of you will be producing many more seedlings in the near future. In fact, if the Forestry Incentives bill passes, and Congress appropriates the authorized amount, the demand for seedlings in the South would soon be 50 to 100 percent greater. This would approach production similar to that experienced during the Soil Bank era. With the expansion of our nurseries and utilization of our nursery capacity, I think production could be doubled within 2-3 years. Of Course, several States would need an additional nursery. I'm not telling you to go home and start work to double your production, but it may be wise to do a little planning--because I think a big upturn in tree planting is just over the horizon.