

“We may well assume, if there is a forest by Nature in a given district, it has its good use for the surrounding farmland. We should have sufficient insight, on no account to exterminate the forest in such districts, but to preserve it as well.

Therefore we should have the heart-when we see the vegetation is becoming stunted, not merely to make experiments on the fields alone, but to increase the wooded areas a little. Or if we notice that the plats are growing rampant, then we should set to work and make some clearings in the forest-take certain surfaces of wooded land away. What the woods do- not only for it's immediate vicinity but far away and around it- what the woods do in this direction has to be done by quite other things in unwooded districts. This we should learn to understand.

The growth of the soil is subject to quite other laws in districts where forest, field and meadow alternate, than in wide, unwooded stretches of country. In districts that are pre-destined to be wooded, the regulation of woods and forests is an essential part of agriculture, and should indeed be thought of from the spiritual side. It is of far-reaching significance.”

We have been cutting down some of the smaller trees which have sprouted up and around the garden behind our barn. Ten years ago they weren't a problem, but surely little trees get bigger. As I walk along the garden's edge and look for the sleg, I don't want to see tree branches. The sap is down during winter and it's time to thin some out. Because there is a wooded hill to the west, all of the trees are leaning east, making them easy to fall. Still, I don't like cutting trees; Lord knows the Earth has had too many forests cut down. But the rampant gardens are getting shaded, and the life forces around here need to focus on food, not brush. Vegetables need all the sun they can get.

Soon a dozen small trees lay down and we hauled the branches to the edge of the field. The stove wood gets ricked up in the barn to dry out for a year. Light pours into the western side of the garden like it did ten years ago. This will make the vegetables happy.

Prairie land is so different from forestland. Our soils were made from trees, brush and river cane, and are very old. Midwestern farmland was formed more recently by glaciers, bison and grass. Obviously different forces are at work. How we manage our woods affects our crops; more so here than in cornfields where I was raised.

Forests offer leaves and rotten wood that stimulate large populations of fungi in the soil. Fungi are very helpful in the garden. Birds and mammals transport them back and forth, eat bugs and continually interact and relocate valuable nutrients. We are blessed to have our remaining forestland; it has an immense significance for farming here. But every few years we may need to thin the edges to let the sun shine in.