

FALL TOUR AT PERKEY TREE FARM

By Arlyn Perkey

It was a beautiful fall day in 2011 for a tour of the Perkey Farm in Monongalia County, WV. Arlyn focused the attention of the 10 attendees on regenerated red oak and chestnut that had been established by planting seeds in tree tubes.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners had visited the farm 2-growing seasons before. We had examined an area that had regenerated to sycamore following a timber harvest by the previous owner. A nearby sycamore seed source combined with the fact that deer do not prefer sycamore seedlings, resulted in a sapling/pole-size stand of nearly pure sycamore on an upland site. Arlyn had injected the stems with herbicide to deaden them. He then planted acorns in short (about 18" high) tubes. The second growing season, Arlyn selected the best (tallest, most vigorous) seedlings, and put them in prototype, 7-inch diameter, 3 foot tall, tubes being field tested by Plantra.



Figure 1. Red oak seedling in a Plantra-OMNI Tube

These prototypes have been improved and are currently being marketed as OMNI Plant Tubes. The larger diameter tubes are supported by 2 fiber glass stakes that are easily driven to a depth of 14 inches in the soil. The performance of the 2-year old seedlings was impressive. The larger diameter of the tubes allows additional light to penetrate to a lower level in the tube. Leaves have more room so they are not held stationary in the tube. They are better able to orient toward the sun, and grow to a larger size.

On November 12, red oak leaves were in color transition from green to, red or yellow, and then on to brown. Red oak leaves that transition to red are believed to have higher carbohydrate content than red oak leaves that transition to yellow. This made the advantage of additional light for seedlings in the larger tubes visible (red leaves instead of yellow leaves). The timing of the tour was excellent.

Plantra provided a sample of the new OMNI Plant Tube, 2 new supporting fiberglass stakes, and new Stretch Lock ties. Those free samples along with fresh-baked cookies sent everyone home with a smile on their face.

For more information about this topic contact Arlyn Perkey at: aperkey1@live.com