

# Not for the Fast Buck Crowd

by Jack Rentz

[www.kwoa.net](http://www.kwoa.net)

Some time ago I attended a forestry field day in Fleming County, accompanied by my daughter and grandson, who was about four years old at the time. The forester who conducted the session commented that it was good that we brought my grandson along because his generation would be the first one to realize any financial benefits from tree seedlings that we plant on our property.

This concept is not new to anyone who grows hardwoods with the idea of a financial return. According to University of Kentucky Forestry Extension it takes 60-80 years for most hardwood tree species to grow from seedling to economic maturity, although most owners who harvest timber did not plant their trees as seedlings and many have trees with a variety of ages. This time span has big implications for timber as an investment.

Directly or indirectly, a lot of woodland management is devoted to dealing with this long time horizon. If properly followed, these management practices generally have the benefit of improving hardwoods as an investment. Good woodland management helps owners understand the characteristics of their property and helps them address woodland threats such as invasive species and diseases. It also improves timber quality, which should improve the financial return and the possibility for interim harvests, which would generate cash flow prior to the harvest at maturity.

Many woodland owners don't have the background in forestry that would be necessary to undertake good woodland management practices on their own. However, plenty of help is available from the Kentucky Division of Forestry, University of Kentucky Forestry Extension, and private consulting foresters. In addition, the activities of the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association provide members with educational activities and the ability to network with

other woodland owners.

Funding for management practices is available through programs from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These programs do not represent a direct financial return to the landowner, but they provide the opportunity to fund a portion of approved management activities with no obligation to repay the funds as long as the terms of the program are met.

Woodland certification also has the potential of improving the value of timber at harvest. Additionally, the certification process requires that proper woodland management procedures are followed. Help is available from the Center for Forest and Wood Certification ([www.forestcertificationcenter.org](http://www.forestcertificationcenter.org)), managed by the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry.

Some woodland owners look to non-timber crops such as mushrooms, ginseng, and honey to generate regular income. Others realize regular income by leasing their land to hunters.

Another key in maximizing financial return from woodland ownership is to work with a consulting forester. The value of the expertise provided should produce dollar results that far exceed

the fee charged.

In addition to educational and networking opportunities, membership in the Kentucky Woodland Owners Association provides support for activities that have benefits to woodland owners in the Commonwealth. On an ongoing basis KWOA advocates for adequate staffing at the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the agency that employs service foresters that assist landowners. Other examples are KWOA's support of efforts to require taxing authorities to bring woodland tax valuations in line with the financial realities of woodland ownership, and recent successful efforts to avert the closing of the state seedling nursery in Morgan County.



*Planning and planting for the future. Kentucky's hardwoods generally naturally regenerate, but seedlings can be planted in areas where there are no trees or you want to change the species composition.*

For more information log on to [www.kwoa.net](http://www.kwoa.net)