



Pitch Pine Conservation



Chestnut oak encroaching on a stand of pitch pine

Photograph: Greg Decker

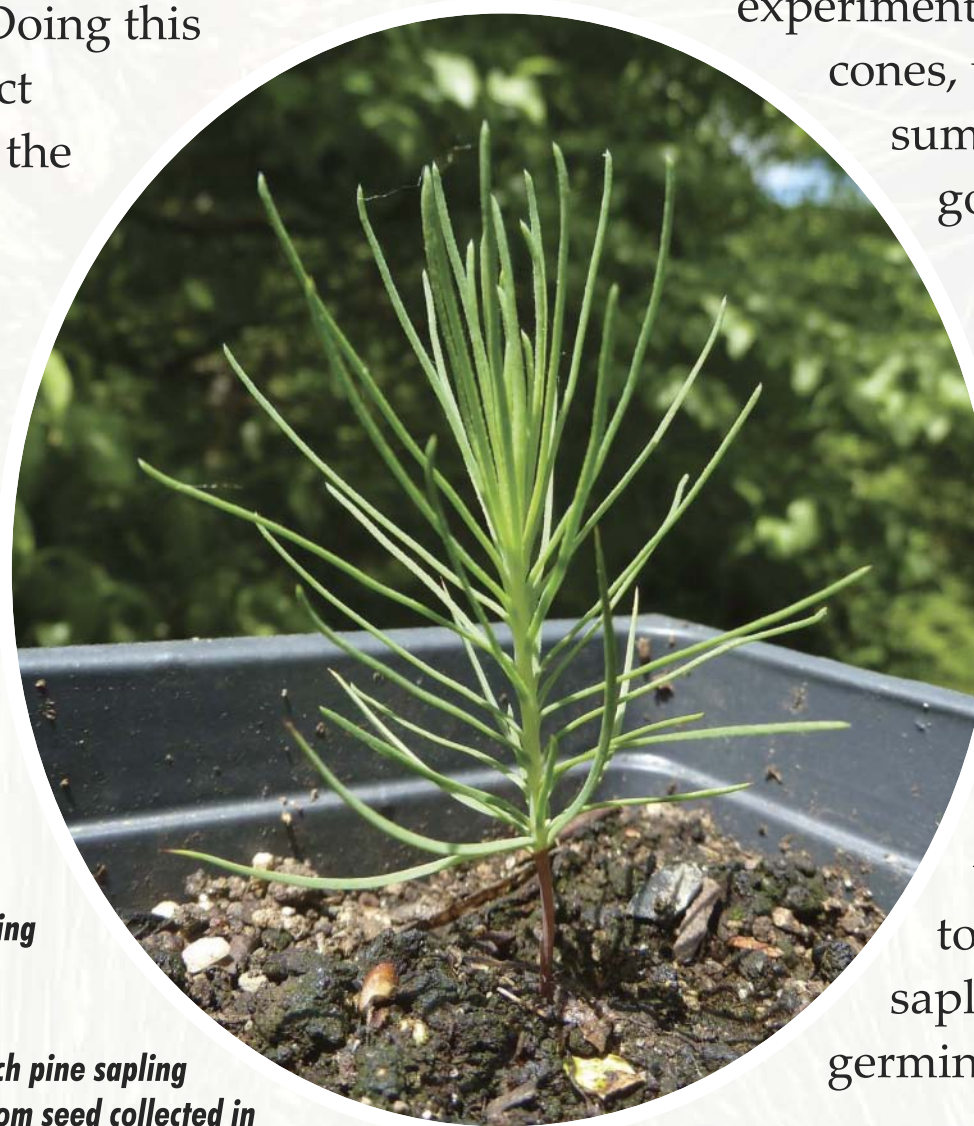
In the absence of fire, oaks and other hardwoods easily overtake the slower growing pitch pines. Even though prescribed and controlled fire is the best natural method for helping with their survival and inducing reproduction, it is not feasible in the preserve due to surrounding housing developments.



Culling and clearing encroaching oak trees and branches is another way to enhance survival of pitch pines and scrub oaks. Doing this allows more direct sunlight to reach the tree's crown and help sustain growth. CT-DEEP foresters highly recommend this method.

Left: Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve Management Council discuss the culling and clearing of encroaching trees

Right: Pitch pine sapling grown from seed collected in Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve



Photograph: Greg Decker

Fine mesh bags are used to collect seeds from select pinecones

Collecting seeds from cones is another conservation method. The seeds can be planted directly in the forest or germinated and raised in a controlled environment to produce saplings for transplanting.

The Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (OHNP) Management Council has experimented with seed collection by placing fine mesh bags over selected cones, which may be nonserotinous, on existing trees, during the late summer through winter. Seeds collected in the bags do not need to go through a process of cold seed stratification.

In nature, seeds require certain conditions to germinate. Seed stratification is the process in which seed dormancy is broken to promote germination. For the stratification of seeds to be successful, it is necessary to mimic the exact conditions required when breaking dormancy in nature. Some seeds require warm and moist treatment, while others require cool and wet treatment.

To plant seeds or transplant saplings, selected small areas on the ridgetops will be cleared. The cleared area will be scarified to remove the top layer of leaf litter and detritus. Seeds and/or saplings will then be planted in the mineral soils needed to germinate and grow.

The Management Council will use the above two methods to help assist the survival of pitch pines in the preserve.

