

## VII. Visual Effects of Treatment

When discussing the post-treatment appearance of the stand with the landowner, be sure to talk about what to do with the midstory trees. Will they be cut or knocked down during the treatment operation? Or, will they remain standing to provide foliage in the midstory?

Considering only the visual effects, to cut or not to cut the midstory is a decision that can be made based on landowner preference. Some landowners prefer the park-like appearance achieved when the midstory is removed. Others may want to leave the midstory trees standing to reduce the open appearance of the stand.

Another visual consideration affecting the decision is the high probability that residual midstory trees could epicormic branch profusely. Generally, these are low-value trees anyway, but the presence of many small trees with epicormic branches may be an aesthetic liability to some landowners.

Because most crop trees are in the main crown canopy, midstory trees are usually not serious competitors. However, if establishment and development of regeneration is part of the Crop Tree Management prescription, leaving midstory trees may critically affect the regeneration process.

Shade from midstory trees usually has an inhibiting effect on development of an understory layer of vegetation. This may be positive or negative, depending upon the prescription.



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*When this stand received a Crop Tree Management treatment, the midstory trees were cut. Some landowners prefer the park-like appearance obtained by removal of the midstory.*

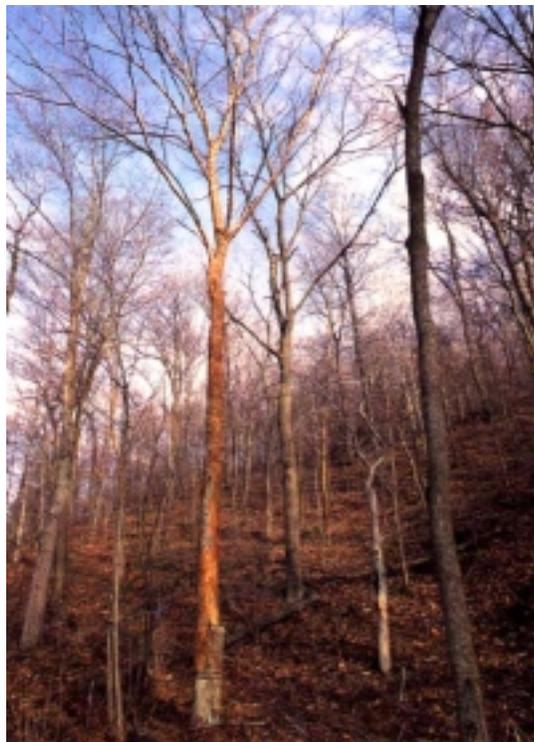
*When midstory trees are not cut, the slash and other evidence of management is less visible.*



How the work is done also has an effect on post-treatment appearance of the area. If competing trees are girdled instead of felled, there is less slash on the ground following completion of the treatment. However, if the trees are girdled too deeply, they may fall over and hang-up in standing trees. This creates an aesthetic liability more offensive than slash, not to mention the safety hazard it poses.

Girdling with a chainsaw to a depth of one inch is sufficient to kill trees. Cutting deeper, especially on small trees, increases the probability they will fall over soon after girdling.

*Competing trees may be girdled instead of felled. This provides standing, dead, woody habitat for some species of wildlife. It also decreases the amount of slash on the ground right after treatment.*



Timing of the cut is another consideration. If felling is performed during the growing season, there will be a brown-up effect that is very apparent. However, if competing trees are felled during the dormant season, there will be no leaves to turn brown. Consequently, there will be less contrast between the slash and the standing trees.



*When competing trees are cut during the growing season, the leaves turn brown, increasing the visibility of the treatment.*

If competing trees are girdled, the season when the work is done may have a significant effect on how quickly the trees die and how apparent their death is. Many ring-porous species die quickly if girdled between July 15 and September 15 (see Appendix C).

Although a "quick kill" may provide the desired timber and wildlife benefit, it could be visually offensive to some landowners.



*Access trails through the woody debris can help make the treatment more acceptable to the landowner.*

The appearance of treated stands changes rapidly with time. The following scenes show how quickly the slash loses prominence as it settles to the ground and understory vegetation grows through it.

The yellow-poplar stand pictured is being managed for timber production. It received a heavy dormant-season cut, which was financed with the assistance of a cost-share program. No timber products were removed from the area, so there was a dense concentration of slash immediately after cutting. Midstory trees were felled to achieve a park-like appearance in the stand.

*Immediately after treatment slash is very prominent.*



*Near the end of the second growing season, the understory vegetation has reduced the visibility of the slash.*



*When autumn arrives and leaves begin to fall, the slash and understory blend together in appearance.*



*Winter snows tend to focus attention on the overstory where individual trees contrast with the white surroundings.*



As you can see from the photographs, the season of the year can also affect how the landowner and other forest visitors may perceive a Crop Tree Management treatment.