

cattle traffic while the trees are small. Approximately fifty percent of these trees have survived as of November of 2007.

In the spring of 2006 we planted fifty more black walnut seedlings in the silvopasture area. Although we had planned to use butternut for this planting, seedlings were unavailable. Fifty white oak seedlings were also planted within the silvopasture area. These trees, though slower growing than butternut or black walnut, also are extremely valuable as lumber and will add value to the farm in the long run. Planted oak trees do thrive on our street, though they do not seem to be common in the wild ecosystems here. We have also recently located a few indigenous oak trees within the silvopasture area, which will be protected from the cows.

Tamarack and spruce seedlings from elsewhere on the farm were also planted in the silvopasture area in 2007. In fact, tamarack seems to fit quite well into our overall silvopasture plan, since the cows do not bother it, even when it is left unprotected in the pasture. This project has taught us that tamarack works particularly well in a silvopasture setting, especially in a northern climate. A fast-growing, extremely hardy tree adaptable to a wide variety of soils, tamarack produces durable and rot-resistant wood, which fetches a premium at local sawmills in our region. We would recommend it to other farmers considering a silvopasture project.

Black walnut also works particularly well in a silvopasture setting. Because of its value, it adds to the long-term viability of any project like the one conducted at O'Meara Family Farm. Its slower growth makes it a fit companion to tamarack or other species in silvopasture.

Wood and feed were not the only benefits of the silvopasture project. The cows consistently used the silvopasture as shelter in not infrequent bouts of inclement weather. In summer thunderstorms, in heat, and in cold rains, the cows could often be found comfortably waiting out the weather among the trees left as part of the silvopasture plan.

In general, this agroforestry project has convinced us that silvopasture should be an important part of this particular farm and would likely work well on many farms. Several wood products, including lumber and firewood, offer real potential for profit. With relatively little financial investment involved in the normal development of a silvopasture, gains in productivity come with little risk. Much of the work can be done in the winter, when other farm obligations are often minimal. As more farmers look for ways to stay efficient and economically viable in a difficult marketplace, more land may be converted to two purposes— healthy, productive, pasture and a place where long-term tree crops thrive.

This project was funded by a farmer grant from SARE – Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.