

Working On A Poplar Farm

In 2017, the Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest (AHB) team started reaching out to the people who take care of poplar farms. We wanted to learn from you about the poplar trees and see what we could share with you. Here is what we learned:

Working on tree farms is good, steady work with many advantages.

"To me that is something that with the trees I enjoy since I plant a tree and more enjoy when I know that tree is special for that land that I am planting. I know that the field that we finished to plant today ... that for next year will grow nice and green."

It helped when others on the crew and the supervisors would give advice and help them.

"I think the most important thing is to work together, because I had to work with people who never helped me, I had to start with the scissors and it was always the last one. Now in the work that I am at, we are all equal because we help each other. Because if there is one that is slow, we encourage, and we help to be at the same level as everyone and this is what I suggest that we work together."



Workers without experience sometimes had a tough time adjusting to the work.

"They sent us to work in the trees and at the beginning it was very difficult because I did not know how to do the work, but little by little with the experience, I'm taking appreciation of work."

New ideas and processes made the work better for everyone- customers and contractors want to encourage workers to come to them with ideas. Workers who became crew leaders often started out by coming up with better ways to do things.

"Sometimes there's a reluctance to have up and down the chain of command discussions, but I encouraged it as much as I could, every time that I could, and the results were very positive."



What do YOU want?

Some contractors provide more training for their crew leaders. Ask the contractor what kind of management training they provide!

If you are interested in the science of growing trees or other crops, there are educational options, even if you do not speak English well or do not have a GED.

Many community colleges have English as a Second Language options, including extra help with classwork.

University of California has Spanish news at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/Spanish/>. Or call Araceli Hernandez (949) 653-1809 and Dr. Lupita Fabregas (530) 750-1273.

In Washington, José L. García-Pabón is the Latino Extension outreach contact (425-357-6008 or garciajl@wsu.edu).

Juntos, part of the OSU Open Campus program, provides support for students and parents. Umatilla coordinator is Anna Brown (541-567-8321); State-wide coordinator is Ana Gomez (541-737-8803); OSU 4-H outreach specialist is Mario Magaña Álvarez (541-737-0925).

If you want to learn more about energy and renewable fuel, AHB's website (hardwoodbiofuels.org) has many information sheets translated into Spanish.



Why do we plant poplar trees?

Workers who came back year after year learned a lot about the poplars: different clones, how to prune them, how to make them grow, how to work better and faster.

This knowledge was valued by the supervisors, crew leaders, and customers.

"Three or four of these guys here have worked at the research sites off and on over the years. And several of them can pick out a particular clone themselves. Sometimes we have contamination [clones mixed together] on different sites. They can pick them out and say, "that's not this clone". It's very impressive to me."

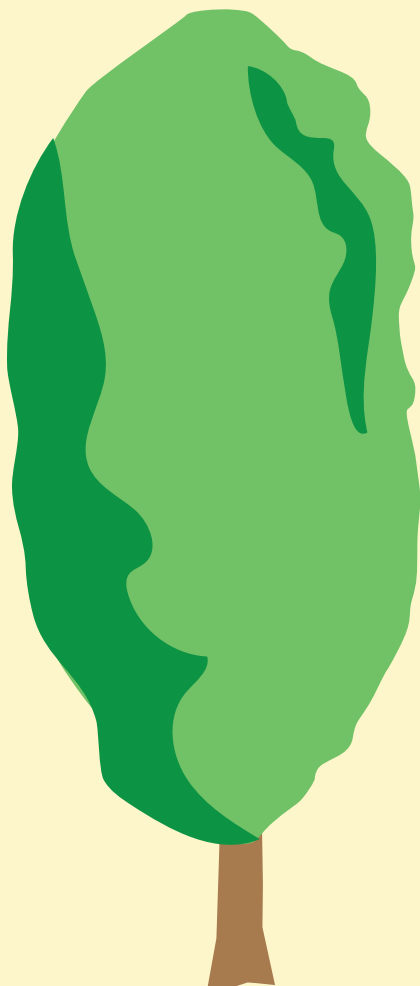
"There are always several of them trying to come up with better ways to do things, not easier, but do a better job and even do it faster."

But, most workers did not know much about why the customers were growing poplar trees and wanted to learn more.

"We did not know what the trees were for, but what I knew was that the pay was good and the work was good and fair."

"We always call them paper trees and use them for paper and wood. We did not get to investigate much because we are all going to work. That is why we do not know much."

"I had heard a rumors that they were trying to make oil. I don't know what kind, and they didn't tell us directly, only rumors. Now it is affirmative the rumors that I listened today."



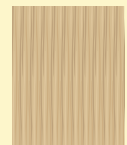
Poplars can be used for a wide variety of applications, such as:



Biofuels



Biochemicals



Veneer



Furniture



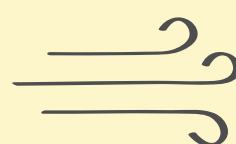
Hog Fuel



Sawdust



Kraft Paper



Oxygen



Money