Christmas Trees can be Obtained in Thinning Pine Plantings

By

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There are many pine plantings in Ohio that have developed to the stage where needed thinnings will produce not only posts, poles, and fuelwood, but also Christmas greens from tops. A good example of a thinning in a pine planting that yielded Christmas greens in addition to other forest products was made in a planting near Loudonville, Ohio last November. This planting was composed of red pine 23 years of age. There were about 760 trees per acre at the time. They averaged about 6 inches in diameter and about 34 feet in height.

In thinning this particular planting, records were kept on the operation including hours of labor required and products cut and sold. The following table indicates the results of this operation, using a ¼-acre area as a sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of trees cut</th>
<th>Number of poles obtained</th>
<th>Number of posts obtained</th>
<th>Number of pounds of boughs</th>
<th>Number of usable Christmas trees obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hours of labor required to cut the trees down and trim them up amounted to about 23.

In this particular case the boughs sold for .03 per pound at the forest, just as they were cut from the stem of the tree. The 15 Christmas trees obtained from tops sold from $1.00 per tree (wholesale) at the forest. These prices are mentioned only to bring out possibilities - not to imply that they are average, for prices vary greatly with varying locations and market demands.

In selecting trees to cut in this thinning operation the most profitable long term forestry was kept in mind as the objective. Trees removed were selected to improve the growing conditions for the remaining best trees in the stand. The amount and quality of Christmas greens that the cut trees would produce was not a major consideration. However, as the trees were felled an attempt was made to secure all the usable products possible, including salable greens.
With opportunities to sell Christmas greens as an additional product obtained from thinning pine plantings, the report of this operation is presented to bring out the advantages of doing this work in the latter part of November and early part of December. Where farmers or other owners have pine plantings that have the characteristics listed below, it is recommended that they give serious consideration to timing these operations with the Christmas season.

1. Plantings that are made up of chiefly red, Scotch, and white pines.

2. Plantings that are at least 18 to 20 years of age.

3. Plantings that have full density - 500 to 600 trees per acre or more.

It should be added that some boughs can also be obtained in pruning pine plantings. The chief points to keep in mind in pruning for boughs is to leave about 1/3 of total height of tree in live branches and to use a saw or other tool with which a smooth, flush cut can be made.