

Forest Research Notes

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RELEASE, BROWSE DAMAGE, AND GROWTH OF YOUNG WHITE PINES

Exactly what happens to young white pine seedlings that have been released from hardwood competition and allowed to grow, subject to browse damage, for a 7-year period? Some indications of the results of such treatment can be seen from recent work on the Massabesic Experimental Forest in Maine.

A study of the effect of hardwood competition on white pine was started in 1952 and ended in 1958. Four-year-old white pine seedlings were released by cutting all other trees and shrubs closer to the pine than a distance equal to their height. This release was maintained for the first 3 years. Briefly, results can be summed up this way:

	<u>Check</u> <u>trees</u>		<u>Released</u> <u>trees</u>	
The study provided ...	60	and	60.	
But the identity of ...	11	and	3	...was lost by 1958.
So this left	49	and	57	...for the study.
Browsing damage to	27	and	18	...was severe.
In fact,	16	and	7	...died as the result.
By 1958, only	6	and	13	...were not damaged.
Consequently, only	22	and	39	...were available for

comparison of growth after release (and two-thirds of these had some browse damage). During the study period, most of the hardwoods around seven of the check trees were killed by scale insects. This released these pines from their former competitors. In addition, one released tree was partially broken at the ground line by snow.

When the broken tree is eliminated, and the 22 check trees are separated into two groups, the 15 remaining over-topped and the 7 naturally released, the following growth comparisons are possible:

	<u>Over- topped check trees</u>	<u>Free- to-grow check trees</u>	<u>Released trees (1952-54)</u>
	↓	↓	↓
For the	15	7	and 38 trees:
Average annual height growth was	7.7	10.7	and 8.9 inches, 1952-1954
Average annual height growth was	5.2	9.3	and 11.7 inches, 1955-1958
Average total height growth was	44	69	and 74 inches for 7 years.
Average annual diameter growth ¹ was06	.11	and .12 inches, 1952-1954.
Average annual diameter growth was06	.16	and .23 inches, 1955-1958.
Average total diameter growth was4	1.0	and 1.3 inches for 7 years.

It has been generally accepted that young white pine respond to release. This study shows that, in addition, released trees are better able to recover after severe browsing. Some trees become released naturally, but in this study only one-third of the trees were so released in 6 years. In summary, when pine stocking is light and there is hardwood competition, with strong possibilities of browse damage, release is desirable to maintain a good proportion of the species as well as to increase growth rate.

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¹Diameter growth was measured about an inch from the ground.