FALL AND WINTER
WOODLAND ACTIVITIES

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Although trees and other woody plants have mostly stopped active growth, conifers are still capturing sunlight as photosynthesis and storing it in reserve for their burst of spring growth. Similarly, there is much that can be done at this time of year by woodland owners to improve their forests’ growth during the next year.

Fall and winter is a good time to release seedlings from competing woody vegetation either by mechanical release with power saws or directed herbicide applications to stems. The cooler weather and lack of foliage make it easier to cut brush, pre-commercially thin stands or direct a spray of herbicide. In both situations, work carefully. Chainsaw injuries can require medical attention and be life threatening. Herbicides applied to brush stems, though typically moderate to low in toxicity, must applied according to label instructions to be effective while protecting the operator and surrounding environment.

If it is just too cold or wet to work outdoors, inspect equipment and accomplish any needed repairs. Next on the list is record keeping. Let’s see, just where are those load tickets from this year’s timber sale? Whether you store your receipts in a shoe box or on a computer, recording the “four D’s” …. date, dollars, details, and direction (cross reference) for expenses, income and any time that you spend in managing your property can have important estate and income tax ramifications. Yes, record keeping counts in demonstrating active woodland management.

If you harvested timber last year in a regeneration harvest (clearcutting or shelterwood), make sure that you have scoped out the planting site for root disease, weed or animal problems, ordered seedlings that match the site and have lined up reputable planters and identified post-planting seedling maintenance. These are all easier to figure out before planting than after the fact. The sooner seedlings are planted after timber harvest, the faster they will start to grow. Letting brush and grass get a head start slows seedling growth.

Getting ahead on these and other tasks will get your trees off to a better start next year and reduce your future workload. For questions contact Ole Helgerson, WSU Extension Forester, helgerso@wsu.edu, 509-427-9427. WSU programs and employment are open to all without discrimination.