



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



A Day for Trees

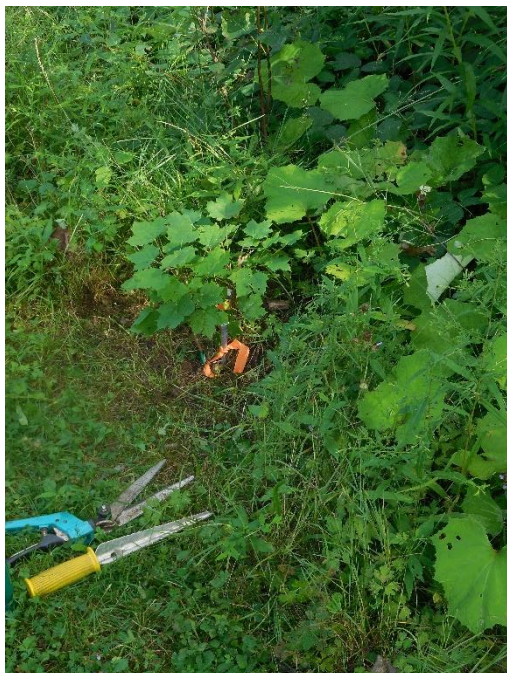
Published April 30, 2021

Arbor Day (April 30th here though already celebrated last Sunday in Australia and New Zealand) seems like the perfect time to talk about trees. That's one thing we can probably always enjoy in common.

When I lived in Warren, I had a normal-sized house on a normal-sized lot (except the lot dipped way down in back). Though being as intrigued with trees back then, I tried to count all those in my backyard (I don't remember there being any out front). I confess I always gave up – simply too many (when one started with the tiniest ones). It's truly amazing how many trees can grow happily in a very small space. Take a peek wherever you are – please.

For no better reason than I seem to do quite a number of unfathomable things, I began to “census” my trees a number of years ago, in 2003 to be exact, though some of my dates go back as far as the house, 1997. And there was a reason: my garden journal had pages for trees, shrubs, vines, etc. (Woody Perennials)

Usually it's August when, with pen and paper, tape measure (hey! You never know!) and my (let's get this right:) Forestry Suppliers Tangent Height Gauge which, when I sight where the eyeglass used to be, I can estimate the height of any tree: angle, my height and the distance walked to the tree's base. The trees don't always make that easy.



Of course, planting trees has been a happy chore with this property. I've harvested many juicy pears, not been so lucky with the “orchard.” An apple or two is usually buggy or so bruised it's left for the wildlife and the pear trees planted up there have never amounted to anything.

A dogwood, in memorial of one pet or another, seems happy and, I expect, will blossom when its time comes. My beloved red maple sadly gave up the ghost a couple years back. Its distant relative – “Mike” – sprouts quickly though I suspect he'd be happier with more sunshine but I didn't pick his spot. The remaining trunk and roots made it impossible to use that same site again.

I have always treasured the giant cherry trees that were here, I suspect, long before the property was first purchased and cultivated. Their flowers are hard to discern but the birds, particularly the warblers, love them and I treasure them for the shade they provide to my southern windows during those hot

summer months when the sun does shine a lot. Now they look like they'd like to join that prized red maple in the "beyond" wherever good trees go when their time here on earth is up. It's just very early March as I write but something I'll have to deal with long before this reaches publication.

Bob planted blue spruces which continue to do well, actually continuing to amaze me with their rapid growth. They are all much taller than I. A second row of seedlings didn't survive the yard people (who I suspect had no clue what to do with foot tall evergreens). (Some "yard people" are definitely better than others.)

Now we get to my pride and joy --- simply because I found them, I dug them up and I planted them. I've marked them all with metal stakes and red ribbons to save them because, after a year or two, they are still tiny. All right, apparently I selected a lousy place for trees but it's beside older trees (skinny and tall) who, I felt, would enjoy company until somebody there decides to grow.

I'm speaking of six – five? seven? – maple trees. Anyone can grow maples, right? There's one beside the barn that's huge --- debated about its being there when it was a youngster and allowed to go. It isn't hurting a thing – well, yes, the roots. I remember talking of adding lights for Christmastime. If it had been done then – with additional strings added annually, it would present quite a lovely tableau now. Just don't expect to have a change a lightbulb!

Back to my maples – where I do expect to be once the snow – and, oh yea, the mud – dissipate.

I photographed all last year (their first) but apparently never checked what I'd taken for so much is green on green it could be hard to tell what's maple and what isn't. Later I did trim a foot or so "halo" around each plant just so the mowers could see them better. (I mean, if they reach a foot in height, it's a surprise.) Well, to be candid, most have branched out so much they don't look like trees at all.

But they're there – heck! Can anyone really kill a maple?

I'll be out checking as soon as I can.

Written March 3, 2021

