

# Gardening the Forest

## Tending & protecting your pines

by Dyke Van Etten Williams

IF YOU ATTENDED JULY'S LOWDPOA SEMINAR on how to plant tree seedlings or if you read my articles on planting and tree care in the *Area News* this spring, you'll know that the white pine as a species is dying out. Yes, there are still lots of huge old trees still standing, but think about how many much smaller whites and self-planted ("volunteer") seedlings you have seen lately. Not many, in most areas, because storms, fires, disease (white pine blister rust), pests (white pine weevil), lumbering, recreational and septic site clearing, etc. are rapidly lowering the numbers of NEW trees taking root. And the biggest threat to white pines today is deer!

The single best and easiest defence against deer eating the top leader shoots off small white pines are "bud caps." It takes about 10 seconds a tree to put a bud cap on each fall. Otherwise that leader shoot bud is the favourite winter deer treat. The best way to help keep white pine numbers up so they can reproduce themselves and survive as a species is to protect and preserve those trees already in the ground and growing! If you have small whites, anywhere from a few inches to 5 feet tall, please read this article on bud capping and DO it! Each one of us who does makes a difference!

*Hint:* Ordinary 20# copier-type office paper works great. Cut or carefully tear the usual 8.5" x 11" sheets into quarters (gives you four 4" x 5.5" bud caps per sheet with no measuring). They'll be

perfect. My preference is to remove the caps in the spring, which is what most seedling growers do as well. Thanks for helping!

### BUD CAPPING FOR DEER PROTECTION

White pines can be protected from deer browse by a number of methods including repellents, fencing, wire cages and bud capping. Bud capping is one of the cheapest and easiest methods, but must be done every year until the terminal bud is out of the reach of deer. A bud cap is a piece of paper that is folded and stapled around the terminal (top) bud of the seedling to keep deer from chewing the buds off. This protects the terminal bud of the tree in the fall when the deer are likely to feed on it, yet allows the bud to expand and grow up through the paper sleeve during the next growing season. Deer will feed on the side branches but the bud cap usually protects the more important terminal bud.

Bud caps should be applied in the fall before snow covers the ground, usually by November 1st .

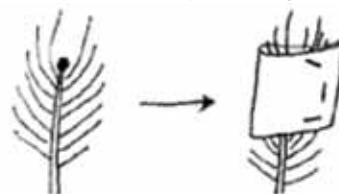
Use light-weight paper such as typing or computer paper. The bud cap needs to last only a few months and should fall apart by the next growing season.

Cut the paper into 4" x 6" sizes. Smaller caps of 3" x 4" may be used for small trees.



Secure the bud cap by catching needles in at least three staples.

Terminal (top) bud of white pine seedling.



Bud caps should be held on the tree by catching needles in at least three staples.

The terminal bud of the tree should be placed at least ½ inch below the top of the paper but not lower than the midpoint of the paper.

Bud caps should be applied every year until the tree is at least five feet tall or out of reach of the deer.