

There may be money in red cedars

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NCTA to host red cedar expo, equipment demonstration

Contrary to what many people believe, eastern red cedar trees can have substantial value for wood products, according to Rachel Allison, southwest district forester with the Nebraska Forest Service.

From chips for fuel, to poles, posts and lumber, this often discarded resource can be an income-producing asset for landowners, she said.

Although the eastern red cedar is seen expanding in the rangeland in ever increasing numbers, Allison points out that there are areas where the cedar has been growing for many years and actually have survived some of the early century fires.

“These large eastern red cedar grew in a forest setting and often can provide some of the better material that produces wood for many uses,” Allison said. While cedar in pastures should be cleared and managed for grass, there are good opportunities to manage cedar for wood products on the north and east slopes.

During the Eastern Red cedar Expo Friday at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, cedar processing equipment will be demonstrated from 9 a.m. to noon.

A hot saw and shear will cut the cedar and then a chipper will process the material for the wood-fired boiler.

Other ways to utilize the cedar will be demonstrated with a post peeler and a sawmill. In many areas of Nebraska eastern red cedar is large enough that boards can be processed for paneling, furniture and other fine products.

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The college has recently installed a wood-fired boiler and has already begun to utilize the eastern red cedar resource as fuel for the boiler. Weldon Sleight, dean of NCTA, notes that the timing was good to put in the wood-fired boiler.

“After a feasibility study was conducted for the college, it showed that the use of wood chips from the cedar would not only be economical to heat the college, but also it would provide an opportunity for the local ranchers to clear the encroaching cedar which is reducing the amount of available forage on their rangeland,” he said.

Students can also be involved in providing cedar for the boiler. Sleight set up a program to provide students with an opportunity to earn money for their travel to and from home or books.

“Students can bring in a truck or trailer load of cedar logs to NCTA to be chipped and used to burn in the boiler and in return they earn funds for books and other day to day needs,” he said.

Tours of the NCTA wood-fired boiler will be given in the afternoon between 1 to 3 p.m.