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ORDWAY BULLETIN
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AERIAL IMPLANTATION at ORDWAY

It happens every year, it is both dramatic and secretive and it results in the continuing re-growth of some of the principal plants at Ordway. The "sowing of seeds" through the air is done automatically by nature and much of our vegetative cover is literally "a gift from above".

The evolution of wind-borne seeds has given nature a most prolific method for propagating her plant species. These s eeds are some of the interesting manifestations of nature's fecundity and they are dramatic since one sees many of them during the summer and autumn seasons - floating like tiny parachutes, spinning like small descending helicopters, drifting like gossamer. They sometimes cover the ground in windrows.

Perhaps the most prolific production of seeds is by the members of the Poplar Family. This family of plants produces wind-borne seeds, the most prominent being those of the Cottonwood tree; these sometimes cause the ground in limited areas to become whitened by their great numbers. It is no wonder that they proliferate so well, particularly in the moist soil habitats to which they have adapted.

Other families of trees produce wonderful "free-falling" seeds: Ash, Elm, Maple. Most of us have had the passing annoyance of seeds on our cars when parked on one of our elm-lined streets; yet most of us would forego such annoyance if inly these magnificent plants were not doomed to removal by the disease blight which has brought an environmental disaster to us. By the tens of thousands their seeds find their way into building corners, cracks in sidewalks and hedges and soon the warmth of early summer rains and sun produces the seedlings of a new generation in profusion.

Some of the most interesting flying seeds are those produced by the Maples. These samara, almost always paired, detach themselves as they dry and are propelled by wind and gravity to the soil nearby, where they depend upon chance to spring up into the saplings of a new generation.

So each year we see the repeated efforts of nature to replace and extend her creatures through this system of aerial planting. Out there in the grasses and on the forest edges most of the insemination will be choked off by competitors from the light they will require for growth; but where millions fail one or two individuals will thrive and mature to continue the inexorable cycle of reproduction.

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