



The Katharine Ordway
Natural History Study Area

Box 216
Inver Grove Heights, Minn. 55075
(612) 455-6204

ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 87

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

The COPPICES at ORDWAY - II.

Along the foot-path and between the two railroad tracks lies a close-packed stand of Quaking Aspen (Populus tremuloides). Eight summers ago it consisted of perhaps a half-dozen $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch saplings and has now grown to a considerable area (about 20 meters x 8 meters) and several hundred good-sized trees. (A "census" estimate indicates about 7 trees to the square meter.) Nestled, as it is, in the edge of a well-established forest of oak it looks, after autumn has changed the color of its foliage, like a bright yellow gem - a topaz in a dark green setting, one of the prettier sights to view in early autumn.

The aspens look out northward across a stretch of grassland and make a graceful transition between the waving stretches of Bluestem grass and the hulking mass of the oak woods. As one approaches the grove he can see the beginning of a real ecological transition taking place in the shady environment which the aspens provide; already small saplings of the red oaks have appeared and in their slow growth during four to six years have only now begun to achieve enough height to be easily noticeable.

This particular cluster of aspen is somewhat unusual in that it has all stemmed (literally) from a single "parent" tree by vegetative reproduction. One finds no seeds being produced here since all the trees are of a common sex, an example of a vegetative clone.

It is always difficult to make complete comparisons although one usually finds himself doing so but this little grove of aspens is one of our favorite spots. To stand within it during the early part of autumn and to experience the feeling of being surrounded by slender, blanched fingers stretching upward and to follow the line of the trunks up to an unclouded azure autumn sky viewed through the round, golden leaves - that is something which is hard to describe and even harder to forget.....

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist

Sept. 25, 1980