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Monoculture

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Nature abhors bare ground and monoculture. Let me start with the results and then work toward the solution. Recently in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas the northern and southern red oak have been decimated by the red oak borer. The southeast US recently had a similar problem with pine trees. The climax growth here is oak because they are so well adapted to our climate and soil and therefore have over populated our woodlands (including state and national forests) to the exclusion of many of the trees of lesser stature. We have some eastern redbud, hickory, red cedar, pine, dogwood, black walnut and sycamore but none of them compete well with oak and therefore are diminishing in numbers and letting the oak take over. If the woodland over a large area had been properly managed by selective logging the remaining oak would have been too few and too far apart for the borer to thrive. Nature, as always, will correct the problem of the overabundance of both red oak and red oak borer. Some other tree species will denominate the area for several decades and we will be forced to find a replacement cash crop. I assume that the strongest oak of the best age on our best soil and exposure will survive and propagate. There are several possible solutions to this problem. We can harvest the damaged (host) trees for firewood (they have lost most of their value as lumber). Economics will delay the solution because loggers will prefer to harvest timber that is not full of holes and therefore worth more. Government will try to find a chemical answer even if it poisons our wildlife, livestock and human population. Nature will slowly correct the imbalance by finding a natural enemy of the bore and thinning the oak stands. We need to help by planting and nurturing trees that the borer does not eat and managing our resources better. The well being of future generations depends on the decisions we make now. Visit our blog: http://wholeinthewoods-brad4d.blogspot.com [1]

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