S & Trees

Thinning Redwoods Improves Trees' Quality And Growth

By Wally Trabing

The value of thinning redwoods to speed the growth of board feet per acre and improve the appearance of smaller groves, has been a long range project of the University of California Agriculture Extension service here.

Henry Washburn, county director, said the cutting of certain deformed growth, crooked trees, and part of double or triple trees increases tremendously the speed of growth of the others, and improves the grade of the lumber.

The proof of this is contained in a cross-section of a redwood used in an experiment already completed by the University of California forestry service.

The section, shown in the accompanying photo, was taken from an 80-year-old tree. Nine years ago, as indicated by the first arrow, the experiment was started. Less healthy trees around it were cut down. During the first four years the progress was slow to detect, but the rings gradually widened until, as arrow three shows, the tree almost tripled its former yearly growth.

Young timber should have some cutting going on in it all the time after it has passed 20 to 30 years of age, according to agricultural service reports.

Washburn said the principle of thinning of redwoods is rather difficult to get across to the small grower.

"And as to the larger growers, they cannot find a profit in cutting as yet, so they cannot afford to do it on a large scale," he explained.

"You see, once the redwoods of this area produced enough lumber to build the present cities of Portland, Los Angeles, Seattle and San Francisco.

"Now practically all of the county is second growth."

According to agricultural service reports, it was once thought that second growth redwood was worthless. But recently it is beginning to come into its own again.

Washburn feels that in the near future, the big redwood owners will find it profitable to sell the trees they thin out, adding, "When that time comes, we are going to push our educational project and try to make them see how profitable it can be in the long run."

He said trees cut during the thinning process somtimes can be sold for fuel wood, posts, and pulp.

However, their removal cannot be accomplished at an immediate profit, the cost of having them cut may not be warranted for any but the stronger owners, even though the effort on quantity and particularly quality is very beneficial, according to a University of California report.

Washburn also is including the small one or two acre owner in the over-all thinning plan.

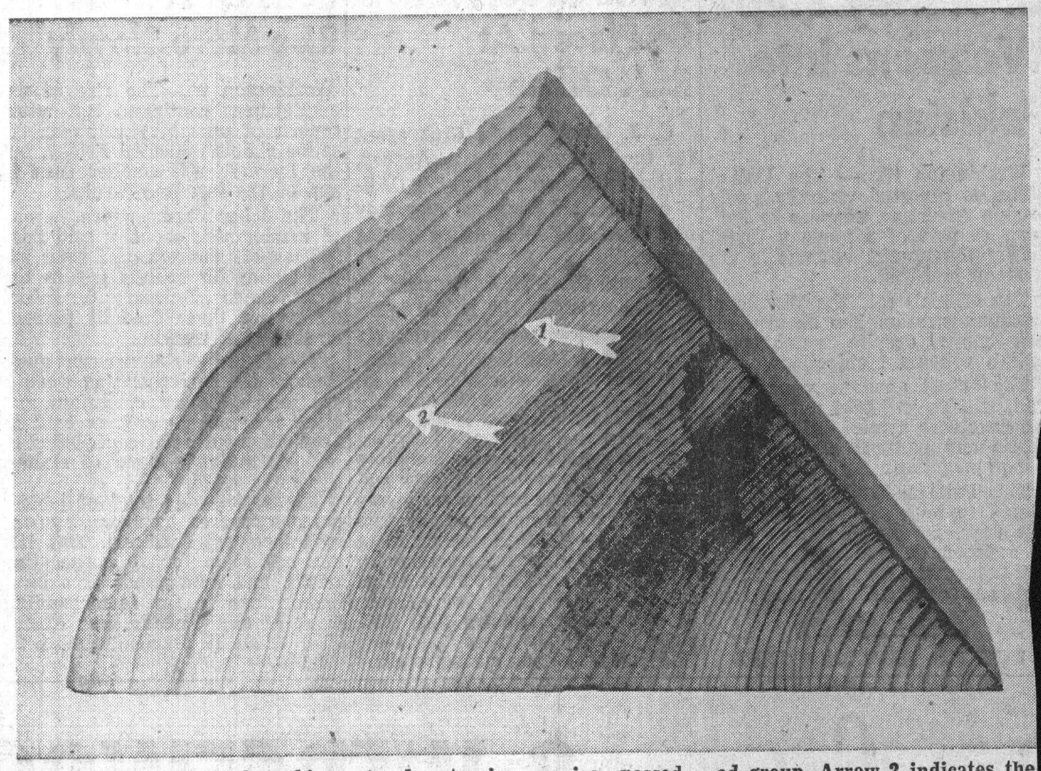
"Usually when some one acquires a small cluster of redwoods on his property, he is very reluctant to touch a limb. If he could see the difference in the appearance of a properly thinned grove, it would be an easier task for us," said Washburn.

"This is an important project," he went on, "because 70 per cent of all the county acreage is covered with forests."

Farm advisors have held meetings and demonstrations in the past on redwood thinning, and expect to hold more in the future.

Washburn said his office is at the service of anyone wishing information or appraisal on his trees.

Proof Of Thinning Practice



Here is the proof that thinning redwood groves will increase the growth of trees. This is the result of an experiment by the University of California agricultural extension service, passed on to the Santa Cruz branch which is conducting a like project on a long-range basis. Arrow 1 shows growth of tree in crowded group. Arrow 2 indicates the start of the experiment when the thinning was carried out. Arrow 3 points out the startling results. See story.