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# The Agricultural Experiment Station

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## Pruning Locust and Catalpa Trees for Timber

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B. O. LONGYEAR.

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Trees planted for timber purposes should be encouraged to form tall, straight trunks, free from lateral branches as far as possible. A forked trunk is objectionable, as it cannot be cut to advantage into posts, and furthermore such trunks are subject to injury by splitting down when loaded with snow and ice or in strong wind.

Under the conditions existing, in a good forest the trees not only tend to run up slender and straight, but a natural pruning of the lower limbs takes place, due to shading. In the artificial tree plantation these conditions may be secured by planting the trees close together at first. But if planted close enough to secure this natural pruning the trees soon suffer from lack of room for a good development of the root system, with a consequent stunting of the growth. It is necessary, therefore, to resort to artificial pruning where the trees are set far enough apart to allow for a free root growth and room for cultivation.

In the case of seedling trees that have been properly cut back when planted a number of stems often arise from near the ground, thus forming a bush-like growth. The young trees should be allowed to grow in this form until the following winter or spring, when all but the most vigorous, upright stem should be removed, and all suckers kept down.

### THE LOCUST.

The black locust is to some extent self-pruning. It is, however, inclined to fork if allowed to take care of itself. This may be pre-

vented by removing all but the main part of the fork in such a way that only one part remains to continue the main stem. Small side branches on the lower part of the trunk are best left on unless they interfere with cultivation, as they help to increase the growth of the tree, while at the same time shading the trunks and soil. It is well, in any case, to leave the lowest side branches on the outer row of trees, especially along the north and west sides, providing no other wind-break is used.

### THE CATALPA.

Unlike the locust, the catalpa does not readily drop its dead limbs, even when closely planted. Moreover, the terminal buds are usually winter-killed, so that a straight trunk seldom develops unless considerable attention is paid to the matter of pruning each season.

Probably the easiest way to secure straight trunks in this tree is that practiced in many of the eastern catalpa plantations. In this method the trees are allowed to grow two or three years after planting until a good root growth has been formed, no attention being given to pruning. At the end of this period the young trees are cut off close to the surface of the ground. The result is that one or more vigorous shoots will start from the stump and make a straight, rapid growth without any branches. As soon as the sprouts are ten or twelve inches high all but one should be broken off, leaving, if possible, this one on the side toward the prevailing wind.

Should the upper part of this new growth kill back below where the lower branches are wanted it may be desirable to run the trunk up higher. This may be accomplished by cutting away all of the dead portion and allowing only one upright shoot to grow from near the upper end, which in time will form the continuation of the trunk. Where the trees are, however, subjected to strong winds during the growing season it is best not to form the tops very high until the trunks have become stiff enough to retain an erect position. Under such circumstances all branches which interfere with the leader should be removed when young and by cutting off a few of the lowest limbs each season the trunks may be gradually lengthened.

Pruning may be done any time during the dormant period. Late winter and early spring are the preferable times for this work. A sharp ax or a saw are suitable for the heavier work and in removing side branches the cut should be made close to the trunk so as to avoid stubs.