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TECHNICAL NOTES

A QUICK METHOD OF DETERMINING AGE OF TREMBLING ASPEN

BY ROBERT J. LYNN¹

Without the benefit of dyes and a binocular microscope it often is difficult to determine age of trembling aspen increment cores. The following method is sufficiently accurate for most general forestry work, and is easily applied in the office or camp. The only materials necessary are a sharp knife or razor blade, a roll of aluminum foil, and a candle as shown in the figure below.

The increment core is shaved along one side so as to get a smooth surface on which to count the rings. A core holder facilitates the shaving.

A two-inch-wide strip of aluminum foil, several inches longer than the core to be counted, is folded in half lengthwise to provide double thickness and stiffness, and again folded lengthwise so as to make a V-shaped holder. The core is then placed in this trough smooth face up, and the extra length of foil twisted so as to provide a handle. The core is then held in an open candle flame and heated until it turns a light brown colour.

By rotating the smooth face in a strong light the annual rings are readily seen as alternate bands of light brown springwood and darker summerwood. A hand lens is a help in counting increment cores from suppressed trees. Total time involved is ten to fifteen minutes per increment core.

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