

## REVIEWS

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### **British Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 9— Poplars**

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The Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 19, which has just come to hand, is an excellent work which represents a milestone on the road towards a better understanding and more widespread use of poplars.

The great possibilities of this genus of trees for rapid timber production combined with its relative amenability to fashioning towards this end at the hands of the Plant-breeder, have caused a considerable amount of special attention to be showered upon it during the past two decades or so. Much work has been done in several European countries, notably in France, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Germany, as well as in the United States and Canada.

Every country must, in the last resort, decide upon the suitability of tree species for large-scale use within its own area, by experimentation or research of one form or another. The British Forestry Authority commenced the examination of quite a large number of poplar clones, in the years just preceding the last war, by laying down trial plots in several parts of the country. War-time conditions brought the work to a virtual halt, but with the return of peace it was resumed, and on a wider scale than before. In 1950 steps to encourage the more widespread planting of poplars by private landowners were taken, and provision for the payment of a special grant with this object in view was made. To pave the way for the increased planting, and to assist in ensuring that it would be carried out to the best advantage of those immediately concerned and of the nation as a whole, a very helpful Leaflet—No. 27—on Poplar planting had been published. Heretofore a comprehensive, practical and not too technical work on poplars has not been available in the English language. This Bulletin, a well illustrated and concise survey of the subject, adequately meets the needs of those contemplating the establishment of poplar crops or who are in search of information as to the treatment and protection of such crops.

Prepared by Mr. T. R. Peace, M.A., who is one of Britain's leading authorities on this subject and who is responsible for the Poplar Research activities of the Forestry Commission, the Bulletin aims to give a matter-of-fact and up-to-date account of poplar propagation, cultivation, protection, etc. Continental experience has been drawn upon, and many references are given, but recommendations are based upon home research, except in such instances as where it has not yet advanced sufficiently to be of practical assistance.

Touching upon the botanical aspect of the subject, the important question of nomenclature, and the geographical distribution of the various sections, the author goes on to supply useful notes on some thirty or more species, varieties and hybrids. A handy key for the classification of poplars into their major sectional groups, and for the identification of a number of the more important species, etc., is given. Silviculture is dealt with in a thorough and lucid way, right from the selection of a nursery site to the questions of pruning and thinning. Establishment costs are dealt with briefly and interesting information on rate of growth and yields is supplied. In the third chapter insect and fungus pests which attack poplars and inorganic agencies which adversely affect them are dealt with, and control measures are recommended in some cases. The fourth and final chapter provides much useful data on the properties and uses of poplar timbers.

In the chapter on the silviculture of the Poplars it is worth noting that Great Britain is considered as falling into three distinct climatic regions. The first—the southern region—is classed, in the light of present knowledge, as being quite safe for poplars, especially Black Poplars and their hybrids; the second—the lowlands of north England and Scotland—is not quite so safe; and the third—including the whole of Wales and the mountainous areas of Britain generally—is left under a shadow of doubt. The four varieties of poplar at present favoured by the Forestry Commission—xP. serotina, xP. serotina narrow-crowned variety, xP. robusta and xP. gelrica are given as a “safe choice for the southern half of England.” In view of this it is obvious that the recommendations supplied in the Bulletin cannot be assumed to be altogether applicable to this country. Despite this fact, however, we realise that British conditions more closely resemble our own than do those of even our nearest continental neighbours. Work done on silvicultural and allied problems in Great Britain must, therefore, have a not-too-remote bearing on similar problems which arise in Ireland, and *vice versa*. Consequently, we welcome the new Bulletin and we feel certain that poplar growers and others who may consult it will find it extremely interesting and of great material value.