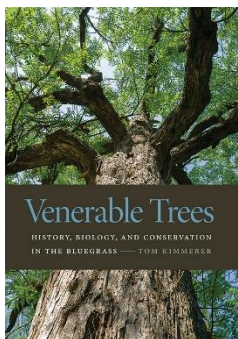


***Venerable Trees***  
***History, Biology, and Conservation in the Bluegrass***

Tom Kimmerer  
University Press of Kentucky, 2015  
229 p

Book review by Michael Rich, ECU Associate Professor and KWOA Board Member

This is the book I wish I had read when I bought my first woodland acreage in Kentucky. The author gives a detailed description of the differences between the subregions of the Bluegrass and the reasons for the various vegetation patterns found in these subregions. His description of the Nashville Basin provides an excellent comparative perspective in understanding how urbanization and other land use changes have affected ancient woodlands.



Kimmerer also makes specific suggestions for current and future management of these unique ecosystems which are under threat. The barometer of this threat, according to Kimmerer, are the “venerable trees,” trees which predate European colonization of the region. Surveys going back decades indicate that the Bluegrass and Nashville Basin have lost significant numbers of venerable trees due to urban development, soil compaction, lack of root space, intensive lawn maintenance, and outright destruction. Because venerable trees in the Bluegrass and Nashville Basin are not regenerating, we must understand the factors that led to the creation of these ecosystems if we wish to preserve and restore their unique features.

Kimmerer introduces a useful concept of the “woodland pasture” to describe the vegetative features of the Bluegrass and Nashville Basin. Contrary to my own preconception, fire, in contrast to the “savannah” of the upper Midwest, was not an important factor in the formation of woodland pasture. Rather, drought augmented by the rapidly draining karst topography is the main factor in the creation of the “woodland pasture.” Maintenance of the woodland pasture, originally created by giant cane which shaded sprouting trees, and occasional intense grazing by bison, can be recreated by grazing animals and creating protection zones for trees. Furthermore, he recommends planting with seedlings from native stock rather than genetically identical cuttings.

In addition to prescriptions for gives thoughtful descriptions of the their unique aesthetic and ecological illustrated with informative maps, charts understanding of Kimmerer’s main research and observation, *Venerable* important principles for anyone seeking under their stewardship. For further the book, I recommend a look at the



preservation and restoration, Kimmerer main tree species of the Bluegrass and benefits. The book is generously and photographs that enhance arguments. The fruit of decades of *Trees* offers insight and guidance on to manage, preserve or restore land information, including other reviews of author’s website [Kimmerer.com](http://Kimmerer.com).

(Photo credit: *Venerable Bur Oak at Parklands Woodlands Gardens*. Photo by Portia Brown)