

Phytoremediation of a Wisconsin Brownfield with Poplars

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Phytoremediation is used throughout North America to clean up, enhance, and revegetate former industrial brownfield sites. We are using poplars for phased phytoremediation at a former industrial site in Menasha, Wisconsin that is contaminated with lead and a suite of hazardous volatile organic compounds. The first phase was a pilot test to determine if poplars would grow suitably on the harsh site. Then, a diverse group of cottonwoods, hybrid poplars, and aspen clones were auger-planted across the heterogeneous site with mulch; the site included a building demolition area. Native grasses and wildflowers were added for beautification and wildlife habitat near a public street and railroad crossing. After two years, growth of several of the poplars has been outstanding, and water table levels and hazardous chemical levels have decreased in on-site monitoring wells. In addition, public acceptance has been very favorable as the site has been converted from an unsightly abandoned property to an aesthetically pleasing green space. Project details and a progress report will be presented.