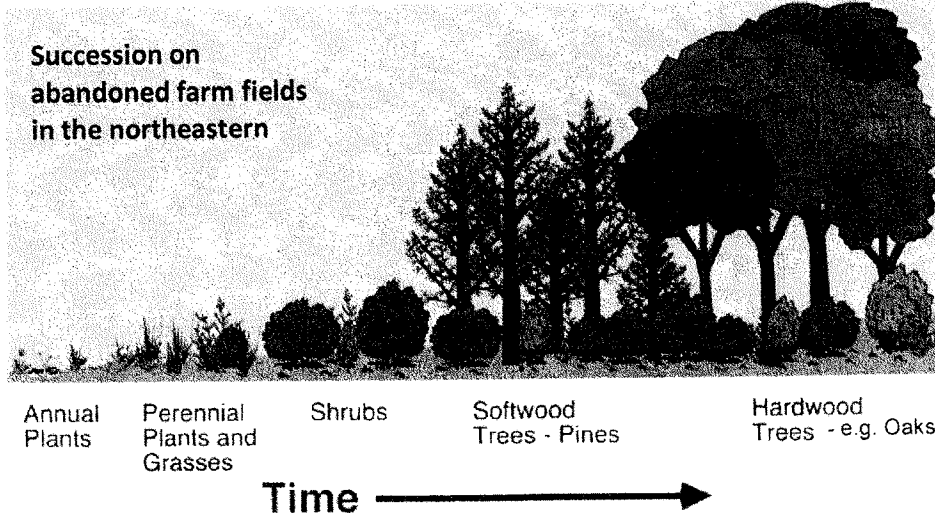


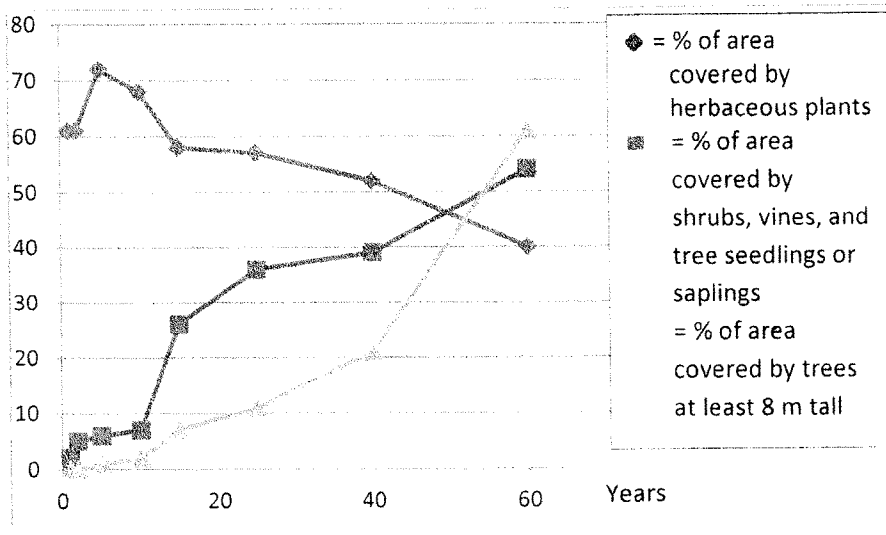
Changing Biological Communities – Disturbance and Succession

Old field succession occurs when a farm field is no longer used for farming. In the northeastern US succession often gradually restores a forest community.



Annual and perennial plants and grasses are herbaceous plants (plants with soft stems). Shrubs and trees have woody stems.

This graph shows the trends in the types of plants in fields that had not been farmed for 1-60 years. Herbaceous plants have soft stems (e.g. the grasses and goldenrod shown in the photo). Trees and shrubs have woody stems. It typically takes a decade or two for a tree to develop from seedling through the juvenile sapling stage.



(Data for fields in northwestern New Jersey from Ecological Monographs 22:195-215, 1952)

In any year, the area covered by all the different categories of plants can add up to more than 100% if some areas have more than one layer of plants, e.g. tall trees with seedlings, saplings, shrubs or herbaceous plants growing underneath.