

Nebraska Conservation Trees Program



The mission of the Nebraska Conservation Tree Program is to provide high quality seedling stock to rural Nebraska landowners for environmental purposes at cost. The seedlings can only be used for conservation plantings which include wildlife habitat, field windbreak systems, Christmas trees, stream bank stabilization and timber.

The Nebraska Forest Service encourages residents from other

states to contact their state forestry agency for assistance in planning, purchasing and planting trees for conservation purposes and to plant trees for beautification in your communities.

Ordering trees

Trees can be ordered in bundles of 25 per species with a minimum order of 100 seedlings. Seedlings, for 2000 delivery, are \$62.00 per 100 plus 5% state sales tax and any appropriate city sales tax. Delivery is made by the United Parcel Service. All shipments are made during April.

To place an order for seedlings, obtain an order form from the Nebraska Forest Service, 103 Plant Industry

Building, UNL East Campus, Lincoln, NE 68583-0815, (402) 472-6624; local Natural Resources District; local Cooperative Extension office; or your District Forester's office. Fill out the order form with your name and address, the name and address where the seedlings are to be shipped, the number of seedlings desired for each species (species in multiples of 25 and a total order of 100 or more) and sign the form. If you have specific questions, you can call (402) 472-6624. If you wish to place a telephone order, dial 1-800-600-1573. Please include a check payable to the Nebraska State Forester for the correct

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Pruning windbreak trees

Resist the urge to prune windbreak trees to look like residential yard trees. Pruning live branches from older trees will decrease density and reduce the efficiency of the windbreak. Remember that the effectiveness of a windbreak is dependent on the overall structure of the windbreak and not on the shape of any individual tree. Although good windbreak management may require pruning under some circumstances, the best rule of thumb is to avoid pruning windbreak trees unless there is a very specific reason to do so.

Branches damaged by ice, wind, animal grazing or bird roosting should be removed. Damage to the central leader of a conifer causes the lateral branches to assume the role of the central leader and begin to grow upward. If left to grow, a double leader may develop, creating a weak spot in the trunk as the tree matures. Forked and

multi-stemmed trees are prone to wind breakage, and don't grow as tall as single stem trees. However, before they are removed, make sure the structural integrity of your windbreak will be maintained after removal.

Pruning is often regarded as a labor intensive effort, but when required, it pays off in a healthy windbreak. A yearly inspection to look for and prune damaged or deformed trees will keep the task manageable and will contribute to a long-lived, healthy windbreak. Pruning on a regular basis, generally in late winter, will reduce the likelihood of an expensive pruning or salvage effort later in the life of the windbreak and may limit storm damage. If done on a regular basis, effective pruning can be done with hand clippers and a small pruning saw. A clean cut will heal quickly, reducing the potential of invasion by

insects or fungi. Make the cut just outside the swollen branch collar at the base of the branch. If large limbs must be removed, make a small undercut first, immediately below the final cut, to prevent the weight of the falling branch from tearing the bark on the trunk. When pruning trees suspected of harboring diseases, all pruning tools should be sanitized after each cut with a solution of one part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water. This will reduce the likelihood of spreading disease to healthy limbs or trees.

In some agroforestry applications involving high value hardwoods, pruning to improve sawlog quality may be an integral part of windbreak management. Under these conditions, additional plantings of shrubs or conifers may be required in order to increase the density of the lower portion of the windbreak. (DJ)

Providing water for winter birds

While water is less important than food to birds, it can make a difference to the number of birds visiting your feeders.

While we often think birds do not need open water once the snow has fallen, this is really not true. First, there is often a critical transitory period when there is no snow on the ground, yet all the puddles and small streams have frozen over from the cold. What do the birds do then? They must fly to a large open water source, like a lake, but this can be quite a distance from your feeder and the birds might decide to stay with a feeder that is closer to the water. Secondly, snow is extremely cold. With birds, eating cold snow requires and takes away energy through the melting process. This is a big waste of energy when the birds are trying to stay warm in frigid conditions.

The easiest way to provide water is by maintaining your bird bath year round. This might



mean filling the bath several times a day, which may not be practical for most people who work all day. With a bird bath heater, you can maintain an ice free bird bath to attract more wild birds and keep them coming back even in sub-zero temperatures! Although a bird bath heater can be quite costly initially, they quickly redeem their cost when you have a line up of birds waiting for a drink

because there is not enough room around the bath.

Heaters are completely safe, but make sure they have an automatic shut off or heat cycling on/off should the bath go dry (this might happen on windy days when evaporation rates are higher or if there are too many birds drinking from the bath.) The plugs must be attached to a grounded (three pronged) outlet to prevent the possibility of electrocution. One concern with heaters is that some come with the heating element uncovered. Even if yours has the element covered with a protective screen it might be a good idea to use a flat rock overtop the heating element that will prevent any birds from accidentally burning their feet. The birds will perch on this warm rock, especially the Mourning Doves. (DJ)

Acreage Insights



Selecting trees and shrubs

The basic criteria for plant selection in Nebraska are hardiness and function. Hardiness means the ability to withstand cold, heat, drought and other adverse soil and environmental conditions. Function refers to the intended use of the plant in the landscape. Functional considerations include mature size, growth rates, longevity (how long the plant is expected to live), form, texture, strength, color, flowering habit, insect and disease resistance and other physiological characteristics. No species is perfect, but some species have more desirable characteristics than others. Planting objectives,



historically have performed well. Species characteristics such as mature size, color (remember seasonal differences such as spring versus fall color), form and leaf types (important when it's time to rake leaves) can be identified readily when you are looking at actual plants. Other characteristics such as growth rate and longevity, soil drainage needs, shade tolerance and maintenance needs are equally important but more difficult to determine. Local foresters, arborists or nursery professionals are a good source of information concerning the species characteristics mentioned above.

Once you have selected the species that will perform the desired function in your landscape, visit a reliable nursery in your local area. Nursery plants usually are properly cultivated and trained, have well-developed root and crown systems and are more likely to survive than wild trees. Nurseries also offer a large selection of sizes and species. (DJ)



site conditions and the tree's growth characteristics must be compatible. Select species that combine hardiness, aesthetic function and low maintenance.

There are many different ways to select the species you want in your landscape. A walk or drive through your neighborhood will show species that

Fertilizing trees

Fertilize trees only when necessary. If growth is adequate and steady, foliage appears healthy and there has been no major disturbance around the tree, no fertilization is needed.

When fertilizing is necessary, slow release, balanced, granular fertilizer or soil-applied liquids should be distributed over the tree's entire root zone. Applying fertilizer through holes augered into the soil or with fertilizer spikes is not recommended. Routine trunk injections of fertilizers into healthy trees are not recommended. (DJ)

Learn at your convenience

—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—

NUFACTS (audio) Information Center

NUFACTS audio message center offers fast, convenient information. In the Lincoln area call 441-7188; for the rest of Nebraska call 1-800-832-5441. When directed, enter the 3-digit number of the message you wish to hear.

Acreage & Small Farm Insights Web Site

Visit our Internet web site at: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/dodge/acreage/index.htm> to learn about Extension programs, publications and links to other acreage and small farm information.

"Part-time Farming" video

"Part-time Farming" will help develop your country environment and improve your quality of life. Just one hour of "Part-time Farming" provides tips that will save you costly mistakes and precious time. Call 402-441-7180 to order your copy.