

## Consider a Living Snow Fence for Next Winter

Remember those areas along your farm lanes, school bus or mail routes that drifted shut last winter?

Now is the time to think about planting a living snowfence for next winter.

Living snowfences can be a cheap, low-maintenance and environmentally-friendly way to eliminate blocked roads.

Most living snowfences have several rows of trees and shrubs planted parallel to the road. Most snowfences have at least two rows of evergreens and one or two rows of shrubs. The area in the middle catches and stores the snow; during the summer, the area provides a nesting area for upland game birds. A living snowfence that is 500 feet long will use only 1.5 acres of land.

The evergreen trees and

shrubs slow the wind and drift the snow in the area leeward of the planting. The rest of the area remains free of snow accumulation and wind.

Living snowfences provide several key benefits:

- Protected roads will reduce snow removal costs and save energy. Visibility problems will be minimized and travel will become safer.
- Snow storage becomes cheaper because a living snowfence can capture up to 12 times more snow per foot of height than a slatted or picket fence and are up to 90 percent cheaper to install and maintain.
- Living snowfences provide protection for up to 75 years. After root systems are established, living snowfences require little maintenance

compared to traditional slatted fences that must be installed and removed each year.

- A wildlife habitat is created.

Tree and shrub plants for snow control provide homes and winter protection for wildlife.

Cost share programs may help pay for tree planting. The living snowfence will be eligible for the continuous Crop Rotation Payments that give an incentive bonus and 15-year rental payments for the tree acreage if planted on crop ground.

Contact your local county Natural Resource Conservation Service, Natural Resource District or cooperative extension if an area near you could benefit from a living snowfence.

Source: Steve Rasmussen, district and extension forester, NU/LANR (DJ)

## Newest Ways to Plant Trees

When you plant fruit trees or shade trees this spring, choose a cool, calm, overcast day. Keep the roots covered and don't let them dry out. Soaking in water is not necessary except when the roots are overly dry. In that case, either return them for a replacement or attempt to revive them by soaking in water for no more than 24 hours.

Remove broken, crossed or dead roots or branches, but do no other pruning.

Dig the planting hole as deep as the root system and at least one foot wider than the longest root or the root ball diameter. A wide hole is better than a deep one. You can improve the success of trees planted in poor soil by tilling a larger planting

area around each tree.

Planting trees too deep can cause problems. Make sure the bottom of the planting hole is firm, then hold the tree in position with its crown an inch or two above the original planting depth. As you gradually fill the hole, move the plant up and down slightly to filter soil between the roots.

Do not pack the soil in the hole. Do not add peat moss, manure, compost, fertilizer or any other soil amendments. When the planting hole is three-fourths full, water well, then straighten or raise the plant if it settles. Complete the backfill.

Apply a layer of organic mulch on the surface around each tree about three inches

deep and three feet wide but about 12 inches away from the trunk. For larger trees, extend the mulch as far out as the branches spread.

Water no more than once a week with about two gallons of water per tree. Larger trees will need five gallons or more depending on tree size and soil type. When you plant trees this spring, do not apply fertilizer until late fall or early next spring. Research has shown that nitrogen fertilizer can inhibit regeneration of roots.

For more information, consult the NebGuide "Care of Newly Planted Trees", G94-1195 available at your local county extension office. (DJ)

## Criteria for Successful Bat Houses

### Design

All bat houses should be at least two feet tall, 14 inches or more wide, and have a three- to six-inch landing area extending below the entrance. Most houses have one to four roosting chambers. Roost partitions should be carefully spaced 3/4 to one inch apart. All partitions and landing areas should be roughened. Wood surfaces can be scratched or covered with durable plastic screening (1/8 or 1/4-inch mesh). Include vents six inches from the bottoms of all houses to be used where average July high temperatures are 85 degrees F, or above. Front vents are as long as a house is wide, side vents six inches tall by 1/2 inch wide.

### Construction

A combination of exterior plywood and cedar is best. Do not use pressure-treated wood. Staples used must be exterior grade or galvanized. Caulk all seams, especially around the roof.

### Wood Treatment

Paint the exterior with three

coats of outdoor paint. Available observations suggest that color should be black where average high temperatures in July are 80-85 degrees F, dark colors (such as dark brown or gray) where they are 85-95 degrees F, medium or light colors where they are 95-100 degrees F, and white where they exceed 100 degrees F. Much depends upon amount of sun exposure; adjust to darker colors for less sun.

### Sun Exposure

Houses where high temperatures in July average 80 degrees F, or less, should receive at least ten hours of sun; more is better. At least six hours of direct daily sun is recommended for all bat houses where daily high temperatures in July average less than 100 degrees F.

### Habitat

Most nursery colonies of bats choose roosts within 1/4 mile of water, preferably a stream, river or lake. Greatest bat house success has been achieved in areas of diverse habitat, especially where there is a mixture of differing agricultural use and natural vegetation.

Bat houses are most likely to succeed in regions where bats are already attempting to live in buildings.

### Mounting

Bats find houses mounted on poles or buildings more than twice as fast as on trees, which are also less preferred. Houses mounted on metal siding have not been used. Wood or stone buildings with proper solar exposure are ideal, and locations under the eaves often have been successful. Mounting two bat houses back to back, 3/4 inch apart on poles, both covered by a tin roof, helps protect from overheating in hot climates. All bat houses should be mounted at least ten feet above ground; 15-20 feet is better. Bat houses should not be lit by bright lights.

### Protection from Predators

Houses mounted on sides of buildings or high up on poles provide the best protection from predators. This may be a key factor in determining bat choice.

*see BAT HOUSES on page 11*

## Urban Agriculture



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**April 13, 2002**

**9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

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Cost: Advanced registration = \$15 per person  
Registration at door = \$20 per person

**Call Lancaster County Extension  
for brochure and registration form  
441-7180**

## April/May UNL Programs and Events of Interest

- April 20 **Spring Affair "Gardening: America's Pastime,"** Jeff Culbertson, East Campus Landscape Manager, 234 Keim Hall, East Campus, 7-8:30 p.m. Call 472-2679 to preregister.
- April 26 **Arbor Day Celebration,** Maxwell Arboretum, East Campus, Noon-1 p.m.
- May 1 **Lilac Collection Tour,** Emily Levine, East Campus landscape supervisor, Maxwell Arboretum gazebo, East Campus, 12:20-12:50 p.m. Call 472-2679.
- May 8 **Lilac Collection Tour,** Emily Levine, East Campus landscape supervisor, Maxwell Arboretum gazebo, East Campus, 12:20-12:50 p.m. Call 472-2679.
- May 11 **"Weed Identification,"** Anne Streich, extension horticulturist, Maxwell Arboretum, East Campus, 10-11:30 a.m. Call 472-2679.