

Things to Consider When Planting on an Acreage

- Think about views early on in planning.
- Consider scale. Larger plant material and larger masses of smaller plants for effect.
- Use windbreaks for shelter from wind, cold, heat, unwanted views and as wildlife habitat. They also create beneficial microclimates.
- Keep southwest exposure open to provide cooling, summer breezes.
- Plant deciduous trees to the south for winter exposure.
- Plan for useful purposes. Make landscape space into a place that provides for functional comfort and activities as well as aesthetic beauty.
- Since entrance areas are not always obvious in a country setting, you may want to highlight building entries and



Photo by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

- important paths, focusing attention on places you want people to go or look.
- Understand drainage patterns before you begin planting.
- Group plants according to maintenance needs such as watering, etc.
- Plan for activities, recreation, tool storage, vegetable garden. Consider family interests, ages, activities.
- According to forestry re-

- search, it is better not to amend soil for tree-planting, though it may be a necessity for perennial beds.
- Layer the landscape for interest, wind movement and plant and wildlife diversity.
- Consider edible landscape plants.
- Ornamental and prairie grasses are low-maintenance and provide year-round interest but can be a fire hazard if planted

- too close to buildings.
- Think about tradeoffs. Fast growth usually means short life. Trees planted closely for immediate protection won't fill in at their base and will suffer in the long-term. But if you plant spruce seedlings, they may not reach maturity in your lifetime.
- Give serious thought to how much turf is necessary or desired since it requires more maintenance than any other planting element.
- To attract wildlife, plant thickets of wild plum, chokecherry, elderberry, etc.
- Plan for multi-season beauty by considering bark, seedheads, wind movement through grasses, etc.
- Protect young trees from wildlife damage by caging them.

Paving and Other Soil Surfacing

Paving and other soil surfacing are generally considered harmful to trees because these activities reduce soil aeration and moisture, and because the cutting, grading, filling and compacting required for some surfacing weakens or destroys tree roots in the area. The degree to which a particular surfacing alters the soil environment or damages tree roots depends on the type of surfacing. In general, load-bearing surfaces such as roads must have organic matter removed, and the soil must be compacted.

Constructing driveways and sidewalks on top of the grade does a minimum amount of damage to trees. In such cases, the surface is prepared by simply smoothing and tamping.

Some compaction and restriction of soil and air movement will still obviously occur, and it is certainly desirable to locate as much of this type of paved surface outside of a tree's protection zone as possible.

Surfacing that involves cutting, grading, filling and/or compacting to prepare a suitable base does substantial damage to trees. Such situations exist in constructing roads, parking lots and other areas designed to bear heavy pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Residential driveways and sidewalks that are cut below grade also can cause substantial damage to trees. In these instances, many or all of the tree roots are destroyed during construction. Further, because of the soil compaction, few if

any roots will grow into the area.

Obviously, planning is the primary method to reduce the impact of this type of surfacing. To the extent possible, locate areas to be surfaced outside the trees' protection zones. When this is not possible and where a grade reduction is not essential, the use of paving requiring a minimum of excavation, such as reinforced concrete, can reduce the amount of site disturbance.

Certainly, when any excavating is done together with surfacing, it would be desirable to properly prune any tree roots larger than one inch in diameter that would be exposed during the excavation. This is preferable to leaving the torn, shredded ends. Also, trees around which

substantial surfacing has been done will commonly benefit from judicious watering and fertilization. During times of drought, watering may be essential to the survival of trees that have lost substantial portions of their roots. This provides them time to regenerate an adequate root system.

Finally, it is important to note that herbicides are sometimes used when paving or surfacing to reduce the risk of vegetation damaging the structure. Contractors should be questioned regarding whether an herbicide is to be used, and if so, specifically which one. Some herbicides used for this purpose will damage or kill trees if they absorb the material.

Chainsaws — Cut Safely and Comfortably

Here are a few tips that will help you not only work more safely with your chainsaw, but also to work more comfortably.

Your back is the central part of your body. When it hurts, it is hard to do any sort of physical activity. Therefore, care must be taken not to injure or stress one's back while cutting wood. When getting low to the ground, as when making a notch or a back-cut, bend at the knees or actually kneel down. Don't bend over and put stress on your back. When cutting brush with a chainsaw, position your body so that your right wrist or forearm is resting on some portion of your right leg or knee. This will take a large part of the stress off your back and place it on your legs, which are much stronger.

Use sturdy boots and be sure your footing is solid before making each and every cut. Chainsaw cut-resistant boots are fairly expensive but are a good investment.

Make sure you have a good, firm grip on both handles of the chainsaw. Your thumbs and fingers should encircle the handles so that the saw can't slip out of your hands easily.

When bucking logs or

firewood, hold the saw slightly to the right of you. This will place you out of harm's way should rotational or linear kickback occur. (Try to be outside the plane formed by the bar and chain.)

Be sure to keep the chain brake unit clean, as sawdust and oil can reduce its effectiveness.

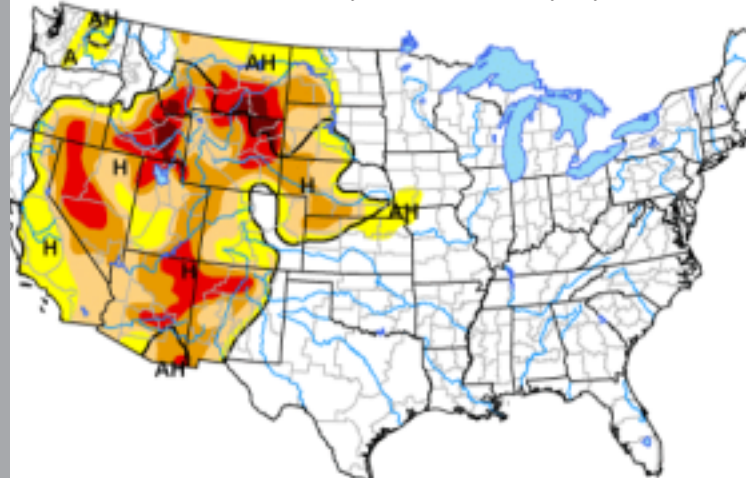
Revving the saw and engaging the chain brake by hitting the chain brake handle with your left wrist will indicate whether the brake is working correctly and it will help to clean out accumulated debris. If the brake is working correctly, the chain will stop instantly and you will NOT be able to see it slow to a stop.

Finally, always wear basic personal protective gear. I never use a chainsaw without wearing a hardhat, ear and eye protection, chainsaw safety pants or chaps, and a good pair of steel-toed boots. I hope you do the same. Think ahead and have fun!

Source: Sept/Oct 1999 Tree Farm Magazine

Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map

As of Dec. 9, Lancaster County was in abnormally dry conditions.



Intensity: D0 Abnormally Dry, D1 Drought - Moderate, D2 Drought - Severe, D3 Drought - Extreme, D4 Drought - Exceptional. Drought Intensity Types: A = Agricultural crops, pastures, grasslands; H = Hydrological (water); (No type = Both impacts). For the most recent map, visit www.drought.unl.edu/dm. Source: National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska

WATERWHEEL

Understanding Groundwater



Note: This is part of a series of articles related to rural water issues.

Water is the life blood of every living creature on earth. Though groundwater is the source of water for about half of all Americans, its location makes it mysterious. Groundwater is stored between particles of sand, gravel, rock and other materials. It moves very slowly in response to water level differences. Nebraska groundwater typically moves between one-third of a foot to three feet per day.

Nebraska is blessed with part of the largest underground water supply in the world, the Ogallala aquifer. If all groundwater under Nebraska was pumped onto the soil surface, it would cover the state with nearly 40 feet of water.

Groundwater is the source for nearly all rural domestic water use in Nebraska and 80 to 85 percent of the public water supply. Irrigation is the largest user of groundwater in Nebraska. Precipitation is the primary source of groundwater recharge. In some locations groundwater levels have been lowered by up to 30 feet as a result of pumping. In other locations where surface water is used, groundwater levels have risen.

Can You Guess It?



Did you guess it? Find out at lancaster.unl.edu

Did you guess it from the November/December NEBLINE? The answer was the wattle on a "Tom" turkey.