



Time to order tree seedlings for windbreak spring planting

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Diseases, insects, drought and age have taken a toll on many windbreaks throughout Nebraska, resulting in the need for renovation or tree replacement. Late fall is a good time to assess your windbreak and order trees for spring planting. Most windbreaks, even those with a few gaps, can be renovated to maintain or enhance their

effectiveness.

Windbreak renovation

Windbreaks can have many purposes, such as enhancing habitat for wildlife, providing snow and wind protection, preventing soil erosion, reducing water runoff or providing additional income. When renovating a windbreak, make sure the redesigned tree stand meets your goals.

Several publications are available from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Service and the Nebraska Forest Service providing guidance to renovate and redesign your windbreak, getting it back into a healthy condition and provide benefits for years to come. They are available at ianrpubs.unl.edu. Find the publications by typing "windbreak" or the publication number into the search box.

How Windbreaks Work, EC1763

Field Windbreaks, EC1778

Windbreak Establishment, G1764

Windbreak Renovation, EC1777

Windbreaks and Wildlife, EC1771

Windbreaks for Fruit and Vegetable Crops, G1779

Windbreaks for Livestock Operations, EC1776

Windbreaks for Rural Living, EC1767

Windbreaks for Snow Management, EC1770

Windbreaks in Sustainable Agricultural Systems, EC1772

Windbreak Management, EC1768

Drip Irrigation Design and Management Considerations for Windbreaks, G1739

Three additional publications are available on the Nebraska Forest Service website.

Care of Newly Planted Trees, G1195, go.unl.edu/dxse

Trees for Eastern Nebraska, go.unl.edu/zfbw

Windbreak Design, G1304, go.unl.edu/avcg

Purchasing trees

Deciding on plant species and purchasing plants is the next critical step in the establishment of a windbreak. This is your best opportunity to avoid plant species susceptible to insect or disease problems. Key points to keep in mind when purchasing tree seedlings include:

* Purchase your stock from a reliable source. Bare-root windbreak tree seedlings are available through your local Natural Resource District office. November is the time Nebraska's NRD offices begin taking orders for windbreak seedlings to be delivered next spring. Over-the-counter tree sales are typically taken until March 1, 2015, or as long as supplies last. Locate your local NRD office and look for the Conservation Tree Program. nrdnet.org/find-your-nrd.php

* Bare-root tree and shrub seedlings also can be purchased from some nurseries. Your seedlings should come from nurseries using locally collected seed or seed from Northern origins. This ensures plants are well adapted to local growing conditions.

Choose plant material that is suitable for your soils and can survive the environmental extremes of your site.

* Select insect and/or disease-resistant plants whenever possible.

* Don't be too quick to buy the cheapest seedlings; they may not be the best value in the long run.

When ordering trees from your local NRD office, a minimum order of 25 seedlings is required; plant species are sold in bundles of 25 each. If 25 of one species is more than you need, then talk with your neighbors. Maybe you can place a joint order and split the bundles. Plants cost approximately 90 cents each, plus tax and handling. You must pick up your tree seedlings when they arrive at the NRD office in spring.

Plant species commonly available through the NRD offices include the following.

* **Evergreen trees** -- Eastern White and Ponderosa pine; Eastern red cedar; Colorado Blue, Norway and Black Hills spruce and Concolor fir.

* **Deciduous trees** -- Bur, Northern Red, Chinkapin and Swamp White oak; Black Cherry; Black Walnut; Bitternut hickory and Sugar maple.

* **Shrubs** -- American plum; Hazelnut; Redosier dogwood; Chokecherry; Black chokeberry, Serviceberry; Elderberry; Common lilac; Amur maple; Skunkbush sumac.

Usually, windbreak seedlings are two years old and be 12 to 24 inches tall, with full, healthy root systems. Bare-root seedlings must be handled carefully to ensure good survivability and performance.