



FORESTRY

Tree Planting Tips

The LPNNRD's tree planting program helps conserve our valuable topsoil and can enhance the beauty of your property and community – but only if trees are successfully established after planting. Follow the tips below to help your trees get off to a good start and thrive in the years to come.

Tips for Successful Tree Planting

Before ordering, take time to plan. For assistance contact the Lower Platte North NRD or your local NRCS office.

- Consider what you will need to do to prepare the site.
- Consider existing ground cover and the steps needed to insure your trees will not succumb to weeds. You may need to eliminate competing vegetation before planting.
- Select tree and shrubs that will meet your objectives.
- Determine tree and shrub spacing and the quantity needed to achieve your goals.
- Decide if the site should be machine planted (minimum order of 150) or hand planted (orders in multiples of 25).

Site Preparation

Site preparation is important to control competing vegetation and to insure good soil to root contact for the newly planted seedlings. An ideal site is well tilled and free of weeds. Consider the steepness of slope, rocks and other impediments, and the need to control soil erosion often limit the degree of site preparation that can be considered practical.

Eliminate all vegetation in a strip 3-5' wide where the trees are to be planted by cultivation or using herbicides. If trees are being planted in previous cropped ground, light disking may be needed. If the site is sod or alfalfa, the site should be fall plowed and allowed to fallow through the winter. In the spring, the ground should be deep disked to eliminate clumps of grass and clods. If the site needs protection from erosion, do all work on the contour or minimal tillage.

Are Grasses and Weeds Really a Problem?

Grass and weeds are a problem because they grow faster and are often taller than young seedlings. Grass is a problem because:

- it competes for water and quickly dries out the soil.
- it competes for nutrients.
- it can have allelopathic properties that stunt the growth of seedlings (brome is a good example).
- it creates cover for wildlife like rabbits and voles.

Competition from grass and weeds is a primary reason for the failure of tree plantings. Keep weeds from growing in a 3-5' zone around your seedlings. Mow the area between rows in the fall to reduce hiding places for rabbits and rodents during the winter.

Seedling Care During Planting

- Keep seedling roots moist at all times. An hour before you plant, place trees in a bucket with water covering the roots and leave them until they are planted.
- Do not leave your packaged tree seedlings in the sun.
- Plant seedling root collar slightly below ground, do not leave an exposed roots.
- Plant seedlings with the main root straight down, not doubled or sharply bent. Seedlings planted with "U-shaped" roots grow poorly. It's best to trim extremely long roots.
- Plant seedlings upright and firmly pack soil around roots, leaving no air pockets.

Seedling Care After Planting

- Give seedlings an inch of water once every 7-10 days depending on weather conditions.
- Control grass and weeds around seedlings to keep animals away and from chewing on them.
- Use tree shelters to protect seedlings from animals.