

Rural LIVING

Windbreaks add beauty, provide protection

By Judy Nauseef

Landscape designer

Everyone loves a windbreak. The acreage advertised with "mature windbreak" can be priced higher than others. Why is this?

Windbreaks do more than slow the wind. They create microclimates, provide wildlife habitat and form outdoor rooms.

They lend a structure to the landscape and screen undesirable views and create privacy. They mark property lines.

Windbreaks serve as backdrops to homes, other buildings, perennial gardens and ornamental shrubs. They add verticality, colors, texture, and scent to the design of your property.

Who can resist the fragrance of a grove of pine trees? A mature windbreak brings a sense of history, stability, and security to the landscape.

Snow on a perennial garden planted in front of a windbreak will insulate the ground and pro-

tect the plants from the cycle of freezing and thawing that occurs during the winter.

The microclimates created by windbreaks allow the landowner to grow a variety of plants by moderating the effect of wind and sun.

Place windbreaks to slow the prevailing winds, usually from the west and north in the winter in cool climates. Plant rows perpendicular to the direction of the wind.

A windbreak protecting your acreage from the north and west would form a right angle.

Windbreaks protect the area in front of them from the cold and wind by slowing and diminishing the wind and causing the snow to drop at a closer distance to the trees.

As the windbreak matures and the trees grow together, more snow is deposited close to the barrier. The drifts near a penetrable barrier are shallow and extend further.

A well-designed windbreak will slow the velocity of the wind and cause snow to be deposited

before it reaches a path or driveway.

In regions with heavy snowfall, try to avoid putting windbreaks close to driveways and walkways. Place them at least as far away as the height of the windbreak.

The traditional farm windbreak consists of rows of shrubs and trees.

The outer row is planted with lilacs, viburnum or dogwoods placed 6 to 10 feet apart. The second row is composed of spruce or pine trees and planted 20 feet from the shrub row and 20 feet apart within the row.

The third row is composed of spruce or pine trees and is planted 20 feet from the second row. The trees are staggered from the second row so the spaces are filled.

Always use more than one species for better wind reduction and wildlife habitat. Stands that are wider than the mature height of the trees provide the best protection, although it is not always practical to use multiple rows due to available space.

An evergreen shelter belt between a road and a home enhances the beauty of the landscape and helps reduce road noise and dust if it is at least 30 feet wide.

In the summer, windbreaks planted south of your home protect the area from hot winds and create shade and a cooling effect.

It is important to use loose barriers planted 100 to 300 feet from the home so cooling breezes and the winter sun are not blocked.

The landowner can select plants from a list of suitable types. Check your USDF hardiness zone, your soils, and specific site for guidelines.

Flowering shrubs, such as lilacs and viburnum, add beauty and fragrance. Those that produce edible fruit such as viburnum and serviceberries will attract wildlife. Selections with colorful or peeling barks and fall leaf color add fall and winter interest.

Conifers, such as spruce, pine and fir, provide excellent wildlife cover and retain their needles in the winter. Their cones add

another dimension.

The white pines' second-year needle drop creates beautiful yellow needles first on the trees and then a carpet below them. Some pines are more susceptible to disease and insect damage.

White pines grow quite wide and will need to be spaced further apart. Also, they are not as dense as spruce and fir and therefore are not as effective in slowing wind.

Pruning of shrubs used in windbreaks is not necessary but will enhance their shape and will prolong their usefulness. Newly planted windbreaks will need to be watered just as any other new planting.

As with any landscaping, observing your property through four seasons will familiarize you with the land and help you to make the best decisions on how to plan the landscape.

You will see how the wind moves through it and where the snow accumulates and where the sun is most intense. Planting your windbreak then will produce the effect which you desire.

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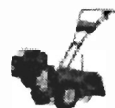
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