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EVERGREEN PLANTING SUGGESTIONS

Earl G. Maxwell

At least one row of evergreens should be included in every windbreak because they can withstand climatic extremes, afford maximum protection both winter and summer, and add a great deal of beauty to the surroundings.

Evergreens do not make much growth the first season after planting, but in general will average a foot of height growth per year over a period of years.

Ground Preparation and Spacing

Ground not subject to blowing should be fall plowed and left rough. Sod land should be fallowed for at least one year preceding planting. On sandy land, spring plow or list one or more furrows for each tree row and keep this strip cultivated for a few years. A common practice in the sandhills is to plant redcedar in rows 14 feet or more apart in the bottom of lister furrows, leaving an unbroken strip between the rows to prevent the soil from blowing. Do not plant small evergreens in the bottom of lister furrows on hard land because of danger of them mudding over during heavy rains.

Redcedar may be planted 6 feet apart in the rows. It is suggested that Austrian and Ponderosa (Western Yellow) Pines be planted 15 or 16 feet apart in the rows in areas most favorable to tree growth and 10 to 12 feet apart in less favorable situations where growth is slower and the ultimate height and spread of branches is less. It is recommended that rows be planted at least 16 feet apart and 20 to 30 feet apart in the drier situations where permanent cultivation between rows is advisable. In no case should pines be planted closer than 20 feet to fast growing broadleaf trees. Redcedar will grow in the shade of other trees and in some cases may be interplanted with success in windbreaks and groves that are thinning out.

When planting small evergreens in nursery rows for transplanting later, set them at least 2 feet apart.

Handling and Planting the Trees

When a shipment of evergreens is received from the nursery, remove the trees from the package and place the roots in a bucket of water or thin mud. Plant directly from this bucket, taking out one tree at a time. The tree roots should not be exposed to the sun and wind for even a few minutes.

If it is impossible to plant the trees at once, they should be heeled-in. That is, dig a sloping trench (preferably in the shade) deep enough to permit the tree roots to be well covered with soil. This should be well watered and kept moist.

In hard land, holes should be dug large enough to permit spreading the roots in a natural position. In sandy land the tree roots may be inserted in a slit made by a spade or spud-bar. The trees should be placed about an inch deeper than they stood in the nursery. Pack moist soil firmly around the roots as the tree is planted. This is very important and will greatly help to insure good survival. Water each

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tree thoroughly before putting in the last shovelful of dirt. Leave the ground level and the soil loose around the tree when planting is completed. A shingle placed on the south and west side of each tree immediately after planting will afford good protection from drying winds. At the end of the first summer change the shingle from the south to the north side of the tree.

Cultivation and Care

Do not allow livestock to run where trees are planted. They pack the soil and otherwise injure trees. Chickens often damage young evergreens by scratching soil away from their roots, and in case of pines, by picking off newly formed buds.

Regular cultivation of newly planted trees is very important and should be done often enough to keep out all weeds and grass. Shallow cultivation after each rain will keep the ground from crusting and will help to conserve moisture.

Starting Young Pines by the Potting Method

A convenient and satisfactory method for starting small pines such as those distributed by the Extension Service through provision of the Clarke-McNary Act is as follows:

1. Gather up some near-gallon or gallon cans. (Some have used 1-quart oil cans).
2. Cut out the tops, punch holes in the bottom for drainage, or cut around the bottom leaving three or four short sections of the bottom intact.
3. In some way burn the cans to remove any oil and paint. (Burning will hasten rotting of the tin.)
4. Pot a tree in each can and set the cans full depth side by side in the ground in a convenient and protected place. A board should be set up for wind protection at least on the south and west sides. Water well occasionally but not too often.
5. A loose mulch of straw or cornstalks should be spread over the surface around the trees in winter. Watering the mulch a few times during the winter is advisable.
6. The trees are grown in the cans one or two years and then transplanted to the permanent location, can and all. Before planting in the field, tear out the bottoms of the cans with a pair of pliers. It is important in transplanting to set the top of the can slightly below the surface of the ground to insure that moisture during rains runs toward the trees and not away from them.

Transplanting Evergreens

Evergreens which are grown in nursery rows should be moved after two or three years. Transplanting should be done during the dormant season. Early spring is considered the best time in Nebraska. However, when moisture conditions are favorable, evergreens may be transplanted in the fall with success in the eastern part of the state. It is important that the trees be moved with a ball of earth on the roots. Balling them as nurserymen do is often quite difficult for inexperienced persons.

Some have used the following method with a great degree of success. First cut out the bottom of a five-gallon paint bucket. Dig the holes the depth of the bucket where the trees are to be set. Place the bucket over the tree to be transplanted and push it down as far as it will go. Then with a spade dig around the bucket, being careful to not disturb the ball of earth beneath the bucket. To avoid this, set the spade at an angle and pry the dirt away from the ball. Shave the dirt down the sides of the bucket and gradually work the bucket down to its own depth. Dig underneath, tip the bucket to one side, and with a long handled sharp pointed shovel cut any roots beneath the container. The bucket and tree can then be listed out and moved to the new location. In sandy soil it may be necessary to slip a burlap sack underneath to prevent the soil from falling out. Set the bucket with the tree, in the hole and fill in some loose dirt, pull the bucket up part way and pack the soil well. If the bucket cannot be separated from the ball, pour in enough water to cause it to loosen. Continue filling in dirt until the hole is about full, remove the bucket and water the tree well. When the water has completely settled away, some loose dirt should be added, leaving it loose and the surface slightly cupped to catch rainfall.