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## EC1707 The Well-Kept Farmstead

Mildred Nelson

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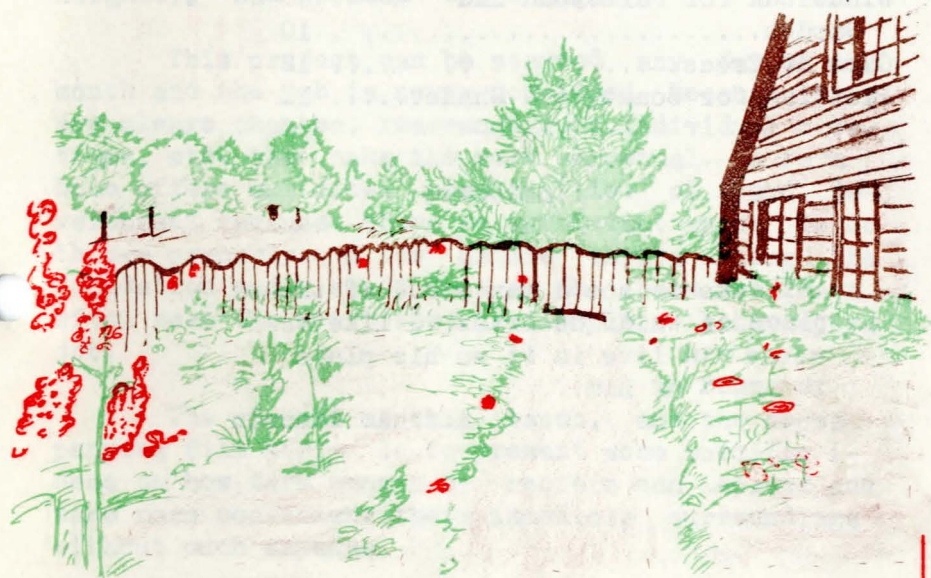
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EXTENSION CIRCULAR 1707

DECEMBER 1938

# THE WELL-KEPT FARMSTEAD



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE EXTENSION SERVICE  
W. H. BROKAW, DIRECTOR  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

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::ooOoo::

"I like to see a man proud of the  
place in which he lives; I like to  
see a man live in it so his place  
is proud of him."

-Abraham Lincoln

## A WELL-KEPT FARMSTEAD

Home Beautification Project  
Mildred Nelson, State Extension Agent

This subject was selected by club members as one that should be emphasized in their 1939 and 1940 program. The material has been prepared with the idea of suggesting practical, inexpensive improvements and practices that would lead to the comforts, convenience, and satisfaction in living on a farm. The only prerequisites necessary are: some interest in simple improvements and a little appreciation for an attractive well arranged farm-yard. Minor yard improvements or even changes are of interest to the entire family. If you have replaced a barbed wire corral fence between the house and barn with a slat fence, painted white, or whitewashed, how long would it be until all the neighbors had noticed the change?

This project can be started any day of any month and the job is never completed because there are always changes, rearrangements, individual creations, etc. that make the work perpetual. A farm home offers unlimited possibilities of yard development because there is sufficient space to do things properly. A few native shrubs along the foundation and a shade tree at the back door have often been the start toward a complete landscaping job.

The purpose of this lesson, and the accompanying film strip is to present some specific ideas on how farm owners or renters can improve and make more convenient their immediate surroundings without much expense.

### I. Plan for complete improvement of farmstead.

Sketch farmstead layout with buildings, fences trees, etc. Give this some study and family discussion to determine:



Changes in fences or gates, the removal of unnecessary fences, or the construction of new fences that would make the yard more convenient.

Changes in flower and shrub plantings

Additional trees needed for shade, screen, or wind protection.

Removal of old trees ( living or dead) if they are serving no purpose.

Location of garden where it has some protection from the south and if possible where it can be irrigated from the windmill.

This plan does not have to be completed in one month or one year, but is retained as a guide to be followed when permanent changes are made.

It is very helpful in visualizing your own yard to have a small-scale sketch which shows all existing improvements. Such a bird's-eye view of a farm yard sometimes reveals obvious changes that should and could be made but have never been noticed from that standpoint. A man told me recently that he had opened and shut an unnecessary gate 40,000 times in thirty years.

## II. General yard clean-up

In order to make other improvements effective, a day of cleaning up;--trash piles, brush, old machinery, etc. is always a safe start.

Prepare permanent trash box in convenient location but where it can be screened by lattice or shrubs.

Save all material that has value as repairs,

but get it stored in usable shape. (Old iron has sale value.)

A few hours with a team and scraper removing ridges where fences have held soil and filling low spots in yards or around foundations is always effective and advisable. Such grading should divert water from where it is a nuisance to where it can be of value.

If machinery is to stand out, have a definite place where such equipment is to be left when not in use.

Chicken crates, or side-boards for wagons, and trucks, etc. left in the front or side yard add very little to the landscape.

### III. Re-Location, Construction and Repair of Fences

No specific rules can be laid down for the relocation of fences. So much depends upon the individual farmstead, the location of the buildings, and slope of the ground. One good procedure consists in making a map to scale of existing buildings and fences from which it should be possible to see which fences should be removed and where new fences and gates should be built to provide greater convenience. The same process can be used for relocation of buildings. So far as possible, one fence should be made to serve two lots and a good rule to remember is that unnecessary fences add considerably to the yearly repair bill.

No fence is better than the posts and the point of decay is usually at the ground surface where there is air and moisture. For ordinary garden fences, 4" x 4" material will be found very convenient and is fairly longlived if the

part under the ground is treated with creosote. Four-inch round cedar posts may also be used to good advantage.

The life of some of the better posts, -- when untreated, is given below:

Osage orange	45	years	plus
Black locust	30	"	"
Red cedar	30	"	"
Catalpa	18	"	"
White cedar	13	"	"
Burr oak	12	"	"
Black walnut	10	"	"

Ash will ordinarily last 6 years, willow 4 years, and cottonwood 3 years.

To build a substantial fence, the posts should be set not less than  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ' deep. Small chunks of old concrete or small pieces of rock tamped in around the top of the ground will give a much more rigid construction. If barbed or woven wire is used, the setting of the corner post is extremely important. The post-hol should be not less than 3' deep and the post diameter 6" or more. Barbed wire may be stretched fairly well with nothing more than a pinch bar or even a claw hammer. Woven wire however, requires the use of a block and tackle or a regular wire stretcher to secure a good workmanlike job. Many ornamental woven wires may be had at moderate prices.

A white picket fence adds considerably to appearance. The pickets may be ripped from ordinary material, sawed to 1" x 2" size and a length of 4'. Designs suggested for a simple picket fence and trellises are given on pages 14 and 15 of this circular.



## IV. The Removal of Stumps or Dead Trees

The most practical method of getting stumps out of the way is digging. This is a rather tedious job but is effective. A combination of digging around stumps and then pulling with a tractor makes for more rapid progress.

Where many stumps are to be removed the burning method is quite economical. The stumps must be dry (not green) and holes bored from two directions to encourage a draft if burned from the inside

## V. Improving the Lawn

First of all, do not attempt a large area for intensive development and maintenance as a blue grass lawn. It is better to have a small area well cared for than a large area neglected. The amount of time involved in properly maintaining a good blue grass lawn is a factor on the farm.

A good solid seed bed (not plowed deep and loose) is necessary. A good raking which loosens the top half inch of soil and removes trash is usually sufficient for seeding. After seeding a top dressing of 1/2 inch of black weed-seed-free top soil is advisable. On fall seeded lawns apply about 1/2 inch of straw chaff as a mulch over the top dressing of soil. If the area is exposed to the wind, a temporary windbreak and snowfence of slat-fencing should be set up at seeding time. (Plan for permanent windbreak of trees and shrubs.) On sandy lands apply a three or four inch layer of clay as a base to start grass.

Buffalo grass can be started on difficult



sites by planting small pieces (2x2 inch of sod spaced 10" apart. While this grass dries up in the fall when blue grass is still green, it will stand a great deal more heat and dry weather.

Seeding Mixtures: 95 per cent Kentucky blue grass and 5 per cent perennial rye, and you can add a little white clover. One pound of seed will cover an area 10 by 20 feet.

Time of seeding: fall seed between August 15 and September 1.

Spring seed between March 15 and April 10.

Maintenance: Do not mow the lawn close, especially during a hot dry period. Real close clipping is never a good practice.

#### VI. Preparation of Soil for Planting Trees, Shrubs, and Flowers.

For windbreak or woodlot planting -- plow or list areas in August or early September -- leave over winter in rough condition -- contour list or dam the furrows on slopes. If possible, divert additional water to area from road or yard -- build all sub-soil moisture possible before trees are planted -- work soil into compact seedbed in early spring for planting -- practice conservation measures continuously.

For shrubs and yard trees -- dig holes in fall, and divert run-off water to them if possible -- supplement this by adding a bucket or two of water to each hole whenever ground will absorb it.

Size of hole -- For trees, never dig a hole smaller than 12 inches in diameter and 12 inches deep and increase this size at the rate of

six inches in diameter and depth for each inch in the diameter of the tree. For shrubs, the diameter and depth of the hole should be one inch for each inch of height of the shrub. In either case, place a layer of 5 to 8 inches of black top soil in the bottom of the hole. If fertilizer is to be added it should be mixed with the layer of top soil.

For flowers-- A well protected location, fertile soil, and a well prepared seed-bed, good drainage, and at the same time means for adequate artificial watering approaches ideal conditions for growing of flowers. Ideal conditions, however, seldom exist but anyone can raise some flowers if they so desire. Moisture is usually a limiting factor and artificial watering is not always possible.

Most Nebraska soils are sufficiently rich in fertility to grow flowers successfully without any special treatment but moisture conservation is of prime importance. Protection from drying winds and good cultural practices are usually more important than any special treatment in connection with ground preparation. Windbreaks of trees and shrubs help to conserve moisture and make it easier to grow flowers and other plants.

In general, it is a good idea to spade the ground to a depth of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet in the fall and leave it in a roughened condition until spring when it should be worked down to a smooth fine seed-bed. If the soil is a stiff clay texture, some well-rotted manure or fine sand worked into it will make it lighter and prevent the surface from cracking. Some well-rotted manure may often be used to advantage to improve the mechanical condition of the soil and

to stimulate plant growth, but without sufficient moisture may be a detriment. Adequate cultivation to keep out all weeds and grass and to conserve moisture is all important and without this the best of preparation will not bring success.

## VII. Windbreaks for Farmstead and Garden

A farmstead windbreak should be located to give the most protection to the yards buildings and feedlots. The inside of the windbreak should be at least 100 feet from buildings--this 100 foot area can be utilized for garden or small fruit.

From three to five rows of hardy forest trees including one evergreen make an effective windbreak for the farmstead. Space windbreak trees as follows: Rows from 16 to 24 feet apart--with spacing in the row from 12 to 16 feet for broadleaf and 12 to 24 feet for evergreen. An outside hedge row can be crowded closer in the row with a 6 or 8 foot spacing. Single or double row of plantings can be crowded somewhat closer because they can draw moisture from either side.

### Windbreak Species for ----

#### Eastern Nebraska

Mulberry  
Russian olive  
Osage orange  
Choke cherry  
Chinese elm  
American elm  
Soft maple

#### Western Nebraska

Caragana  
Russian olive  
Choke cherry  
Chinese elm  
Hackberry  
American elm  
Cottonwood  
(short lived on



Eastern Nebr. (Cont'd)	Western Nebr. (Cont'd)
Green ash	upland sites)
Box elder	Box elder
Hackberry	Green ash
Austrian pine	Red cedar
Yellow pine	Colorado spruce
Colorado spruce	Yellow pine
Red cedar	Austrian pine
(western counties)	Jack pine (for sandy land only)

A windbreak on the north and south of the garden will give surprising results. If the area is protected from the north by farmstead windbreak, then only the south need be protected. A hedge planting held to 5 or 6 feet in height is sufficient. Plantings for this hedge should set in well-prepared soil from 2 to 4 feet apart and kept clean by cultivation until they are well established.

#### Species suitable for garden windbreaks:

Spirea Van Houtte	False indigo
Mulberry	Buckthorn
Tamarix	Artemisia (old man)
Cotoneaster	Hugonis rose
Choke cherry	Honeysuckle
Wild currant	Chinese elm (clipped regularly)
Lilac (Persian)	

Garden irrigation, where water is supplied from a storage tank, reservoir, or direct from the windmill. Water is carried to the highest spot in the garden by a pipe either on top of the ground or underground, or by a small wooden trough. In the garden the water is distributed through a lateral ditch along the high side and carried down between vegetable rows

in small ditches made with a hoe or garden cultivator. This ditch method of distribution makes much better use of water than surface flooding.

#### VIII. Care of Trees

##### Cultivation:

Young trees need clean cultivation for the first four years and there is no substitute measure for giving trees a good start. Use regular farm equipment or springtooth or duckfoot-cultivators. Deep tillage, if ground is well prepared, is not necessary. Time for this -- May to August 15, often enough to keep out weeds.

##### Pruning:

Can be done at any season -- light frequent pruning is better than taking a wagonload of brush from one tree every five years. Use sharp axe or saw and remove branch flush with main trunk -- leave no stub. Treat pruning wound at once with tree wound compound, roof paint, or tar -- do not use oil base paint.

Remove large branches in two sections to avoid bark injury on main trunk.

##### Watering and Feeding Trees:

The feeder roots of a tree expand in direct proportion to the crown. To water a shade tree most effectively bore a series of holes or dig a trench around the tree directly under the outer branch tips. If possible, divert run-off water to these holes or trench. A thorough watering in October, May, and July is more effective than frequent sprinkling.

In general, Nebraska soils are sufficiently rich in food material to supply a trees needs. If growth stimulation seems necessary

apply 15 pounds of well-rotted barnyard manure or four pounds of nitrogen fertilizer (for a tree 6 to 12 inches in diameter) through the holes or trench before applying water.

#### Transplanting.

The best season for transplanting trees or shrubs is early spring even before all the frost is out of the ground. At this time the plants are as nearly dormant as they will ever be. (The holes where plants are to be set have been dug the previous fall.) Dig the plant carefully with a ball of earth on its roots. This ball of earth should never be smaller than 12 inches in diameter for small plants and increased proportionately for larger plants. After planting, the tops of broadleaf trees and shrubs should be cut back, removing about one-half of the leaf buds. In the case of a tree, do not cut back the leader (tip growth.) With shrubs, the entire top can be cut back to remove sufficient leaf buds. This may interfere with the bloom on flowering shrubs the first year but it will result in a more thrifty plant.

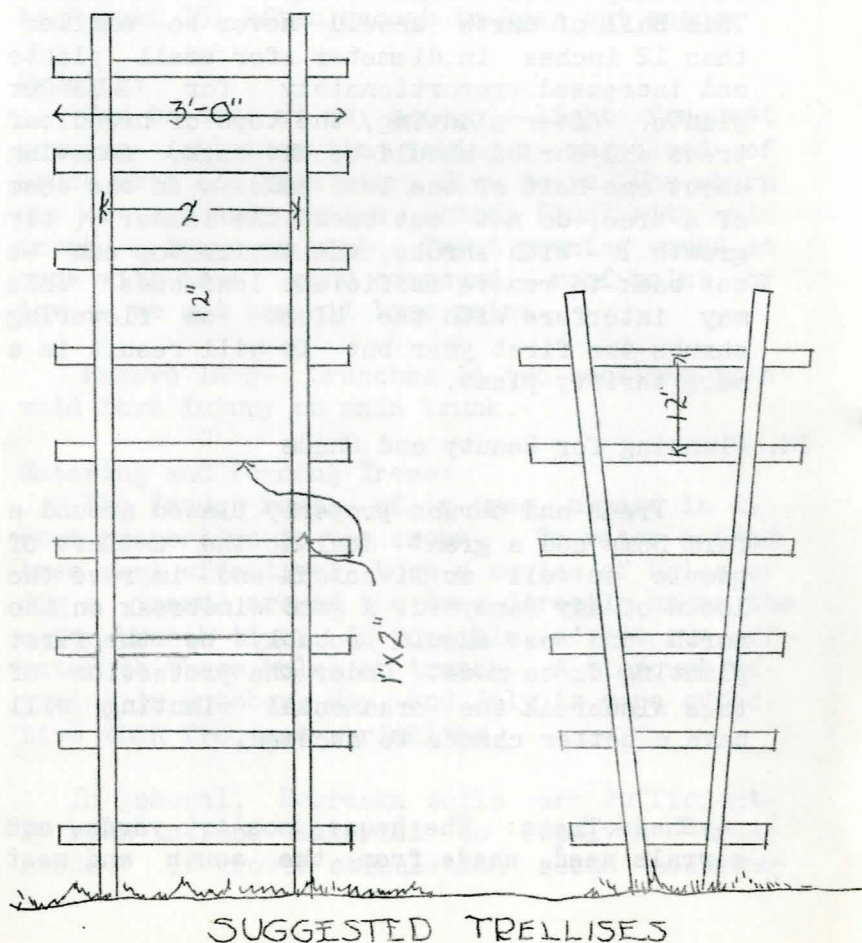
#### IX. Planting for Beauty and Shade

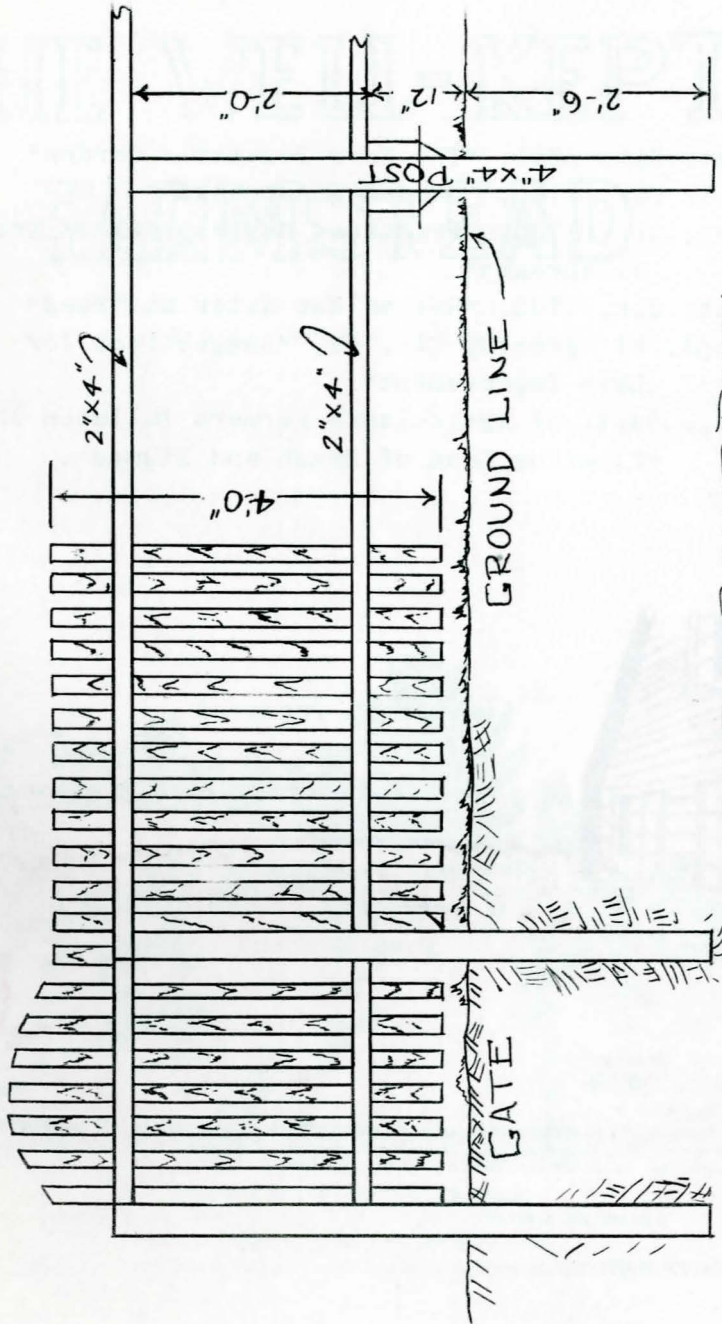
Trees and shrubs properly placed around a farm home add a great deal to the comfort of people as well as livestock and improve the looks of any farmyard. A good windbreak on the north and west should probably be the first planting to be made. Under the protection of this windbreak the ornamental planting will have a better chance to succeed.

Shade Trees: The house, poultry yards, and corrals need shade from the south and west.



Space shade trees at least 40 feet apart and do not set a tree directly in front of the house. If the front of the house needs shade, use two trees set at an angle from either corner, and not closer than 25 feet from the house. Remember that your house is the picture your whole planting is to frame. Suitable species: American elm, Red elm, English elm, Hackberry, Linden, Green ash, Cottonless cottonwood, Chinese elm, Honey locust (thornless), Norway maple.





SIMPLE PICKET FENCE

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