

THE VALUE OF PRAIRIE WINDBREAKS

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One thing that is very conspicuous by its absence on a great many of our prairie farms, is a good wind-break or shelter-belt.

There can be no question about the benefits to be derived from such planting—both in winter and summer.

If there is a more desolate picture than a farm home situated out on the bare prairie, unprotected and besieged by the fierce storms of winter, I have failed to see it. Turn your stock out amidst such a scene, when the wind is blowing a gale, and they stand shivering till they are put back in the stable again. It has been demonstrated times without number that ten below zero with the wind blowing a gale, is worse than forty below without wind.

The moral is: Plant trees, and lots of them, around your farm homes, and you will never regret it.

In a great many instances people have lived on the bare prairie for twenty or thirty years without planting any trees; or, if they have made the attempt, it has ended in partial or total failure, due in most cases to poor methods of handling or subsequent cultivation. Think of the beauty and comfort they might have been enjoying all these years had they planted intelligently when they first settled. And this would have been a vastly different looking country to-day.

In order to be successful, the beginner on the bare prairie must plant only those trees that have proven entirely hardy, such as the Russian willows, box-elder (or Manitoba maple), green ash, white elm, and white birch. Plant these hardy trees on the outside of your proposed plantation, and after they have grown a few years and have become somewhat of a shelter, plant, on the inside, at least a few rows

of some of our hardier evergreens, such as the white spruce, Colorado blue spruce, jack pine, lodgepole pine, Scotch pine, balsam fir, and native cedar. For, after all, there is nothing like the evergreens either winter or summer. In planting evergreens do not plant them closer than twelve or fifteen feet from the deciduous trees, or they will be overshadowed and will not do well.

In order to produce best results, your wind-break should consist of at least a dozen rows of trees on the north, west and south of your farm buildings, leaving it open to the east. Be sure you leave yourself sufficient space within the enclosed area for your farm buildings. If you plant your trees too near the buildings, they will catch and hold the snow where it is not wanted. In my experience it is always best to plant three or four rows of willows about one hundred feet north, west and south of your proposed plantation. This will catch and hold the snow in the intervening space; consequently your inside trees will not be broken down by the weight of snow, a circumstance which quite frequently happens. This open space between the trees will make an ideal garden or potato patch.

PREPARATION OF LAND.

It is of utmost importance that we have our land in first-class condition before any planting is done. Just here is where most of the failures in tree-planting on the prairie have taken place. Remember moisture is the factor that spells success first, last, and all the time. We must strive to conserve all the moisture we can in the soil, both before and after planting. There is nothing quite as good as a well worked summer-fallow, plowing it as deeply as possible. I find it pays to summer-fallow two years in suc-