

# Trees on the Farm

A humble cottage surrounded by trees is far more homelike and cosy than an imposing house standing on the bare prairies

It is next to impossible to adequately describe the value of trees planted on the bare prairie farms. Only those who have homesteaded for a while waiting for their carefully tended trees to develop and shelter their house and buildings can really appreciate what it means to be without trees. There is no good reason why trees cannot abound on every prairie farm, providing a certain amount of care and attention is given to them when first planted. Some years ago the Dakotas were as bare and uninviting as many parts of the West are today, but now, one of the most striking features of a trip South thru these states is the sight of mature plantations of trees around every farmstead which, besides providing shelter, shade and fuel, increase the value of the property on which they grow and above all, by making the home a beauty spot worth living in, tend to keep the young folks on the farm. Following are the experiences of Western farmers who, realizing the benefit which trees are to a farm, have grown them successfully:

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the average prairie farm is the bleak, uninviting appearance of the farmstead, due to the lack of trees and shrubs. This becomes even more noticeable when the farmer meets failure in raising an ordinary vegetable garden on account of the high winds which prevail on the prairie. Since it is possible to grow splendid wind breaks cheaply and with comparatively little labor, it should be the farmer's first thought to make some preparation for starting a shelter belt. The success of his venture will depend more on the preparation of the soil, than on any other operation. The chief points to aim for in this preparation are freedom from weeds and especially grasses, deep

and thorough cultivation of the soil to provide suitable root room and to furnish a reservoir for water storage.

Summer fallow is perhaps the best preparation for tree planting, as this treatment practically insures a good supply of moisture for the young plant. It should be plowed early and deeply, and given regular surface cultivation all summer. New land needs two years'



Planting individual trees, using a planting board

treatment, breaking early, packed, then back-set when the sod is rotted, then surface disced and cultivated till freeze-up, followed by fallowing the next year. This treatment is necessary to completely eradicate all grass roots which would soon spoil the young trees.

On no account must trees be planted on stubble or on land that grew a crop

the previous year, as failure is almost sure to result.

In preparing land it is best to have a well-laid-out plan of the garden, taking care to have it of ample size, preferably rectangular in shape, with a southern aspect and as the prevailing winds are from the north and west, the wind-breaks should be on these sides. The south and east sides are better comparatively open; a few shrubs or a neat hedge of caragana or lilac will generally be sufficient on these sides.

In selecting varieties, those of a hardy nature should be chosen, and among these some will be found better adapted to local soil conditions than others. In this matter I certainly advise anyone to write their nearest experimental farm, where valuable information as to suitable varieties is always available.

## Plant a Mixture

It is always better to have a mixture of varieties. For instance, cottonwood will grow well on the outside row, and be quite a failure between two rows of maple, as it requires light. Again, some trees may be susceptible to disease and a variety would ensure a good belt in case of some failures. I planted golden willow, Manitoba maple, green ash and Russian poplar, and all have done well. These, with cottonwood and American elm, are the most satisfactory in Central Manitoba when a tall-growing wind-break is desired. For low-growing hedges, caragana is the best. The lilac is good, but slow growing. For evergreens, the Scotch pine and spruce are suitable, but these do better planted inside the shelter belt, somewhat shaded from the sun and high winds. It is the general rule to plant trees four feet apart each way. In this way they afford

each other some protection. They will grow straighter and taller, they will form a better check to the wind and, having fewer large branches, will suffer less from snow-break. Close planting entails less cultivation as they soon cover the ground and stop the growth of weeds. In case of deaths, the gaps are not so noticeable in close planting. Perhaps the most convenient method of planting is to mark the land out in drills or with a line to keep the rows straight. One man with a spade makes a deep thrust, presses the spade forward and lays the root of each plant behind the spade. On removing, the soil covers the roots and should be firmly tramped around the root. Seedlings can be planted very quickly and if the root is kept wet before planting, growth is assured. Cuttings of willow or ash can be planted the same way or with a dibble, and should be put in a sloping position only two inches being left above ground. No manure is necessary, just clean land, plenty of moisture, and firm soil round the plant. After, cultivation is very important for about three years or until the trees cover the ground. The chief point is to keep down all weeds, and especially grasses, and maintain a soil mulch on the surface to conserve all the moisture possible. One very important thing in the prevention of winter killing is to stop cultivation after August 1. If continued later the trees make a soft, late growth which will not mature before winter, with resultant loss. It is not advisable to plant in the fall for the same reason. Best results are always obtained by early spring planting; the plants becoming well established before winter sets in. After the first three years, no attention will

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## In the Path of Battle

By Kathryn Jarboe

Under the yellow August sunlight the fields lay deserted; here a scythe leaning against a half-completed stack, there a sickle resting on the stubble. The twilight fell upon deserted hearths where women, with trembling fingers, cooked their scanty meals. The round, full moon looked down upon scattered homes where only the children slept, where the women wept and shuddered and waited.

For the men had marched away under the brilliant, haunting colors. None had been too old to go, none too young. Their lips had shouted the raucous notes, the valiant words—Honneur, Patrie, Gloire—but every eye was wet, every heart heavy with despair and terror.

Bibi had watched them go, the tiny staff in his clenched fingers beating time to the brave music, to the hurrying feet, but, in the nameless terror that had descended upon the land, he clung to the old grandmother's hand and, when all were gone—father, uncle, brother—he flung himself sobbing upon the ground. The woman, left alone in the world save for the small grandchild, watched with eyes too old for tears until there was no longer even a cloud of dust upon the horizon; then she turned and hobbled into the empty house, leaving the child still lying there upon the lonely road.

Before the hearth she sat, seeing the long procession of all the others who, under that same tricolor, had marched out, away from her life, never to return. Hours later, when Bibi came in, his little tragedy all forgotten, his face reflecting only the golden glory of the summer day, he found her sitting there, dry-eyed, her shriveled lips muttering prayers for those already dead, for those about to die. Into her shaking hands he thrust his offering—a nosegay

of bluets, the color of the sky, of field poppies, a flame of red, and mullein, white with the dust of the road—the tricolor that had taken from them grandfather, father, husband and sons.

A choking sob slipped across her lips and she flung the flowers from her onto the hearth, where the red petals of the poppies lay in mimicry of the fire that might never again blaze thereon.

Days passed; only a few—Bibi could not count them, Mere Craquette would not. The heavy-headed blades of grain lay prone upon the ground, ungarnered by the hands that were too tiny, the hands that were too old. There were others, of course, in that deserted land, as lonely as these two, but there were no others quite so helpless—a child of six, a grandam of eighty-six. Indoors, the woman could only sit and pray. Out of doors, the child played with his flowers—bluets, bits of the sky, poppies, red as blood, and mullein, a dried and ghastly white. The short-lived poppies drooped and fell to the earth, the mullein crumbled to dust, only the bluets were left.

And then there dawned the day of horror. For hours of light and darkness the roar of cannon had filled the universe, for hours of light and darkness the grandmother had knelt quivering and trembling before the crucifix. At daybreak the low horizon stretched—a long line of fire and smoke; flames licking up the parched fields with the hovels that stood in their midst, black smoke creeping like a pall across the sky.

In the grey light before the sun had risen Mere Craquette stood in the doorway and watched the oncoming devastation, a foe that feet, however young and agile, might not outdistance, that no human hand might stay. Clutching Bibi by the wrist, she re-entered the house and closed the door.

Better to die crouched before the cross, with suppliant hands upon its succoring feet, than to be caught creeping and crawling thru the fields of matted grain.

For a little time Bibi lay quiet in her arms, listening to the ever-increasing roar, watching the light that even now was redder than any rays of sunlight that had ever flooded the windows of his home. Soon, tho, he grew restless and slipped away from the feeble hands that, with the passing of all things earthly, had almost forgotten to hold him. Out of doors the horizon was still only a line of red and black, and Bibi could not know that it was a score of miles, nearer to his home than it had been a short hour before. Here and there above the broken grain there waved a tiny flag of blue. Upon his baby lips fragments of "Honneur, Gloire, Patrie," he ran to and fro gathering his beloved bluets.

Tired, stifled by the heat, the source of which he could not understand, he sat down at the edge of the road. And now there was a new sound in the air—not the deadly roar of the cannon that had thundered for two whole days, not the rush of flame, but a steady, rhythmic throb that, with every instant, grew nearer and louder. Bibi's mind, already confused by the difficult breaths he drew, could not tell at first whether it was the feet of men or horses that he heard. He stood up, tottering a little, but still clutching in his hands his bluets.

Then he saw, rushing down upon him, horses, more horses than in all his life he had ever seen and, mounted on them, men, different from any men that he had ever beheld. Did he look for the tricolor? Did he know that only under the tricolor might friends be found? High above his yellow head he held the bluets.

Perhaps it was only fate, perhaps it was the God to whom the grand'mere's prayers were rising, but the man who saw the baby hands and the blue cornflowers was the man of war. A sudden word and there was a sudden halt of all the pounding hoofs. Bending down from his horse, the man of war took the blossoms, and on his lips was a word the childish ears had never heard spoken in a tongue he could not understand: "Kaiserblumen!"

"Honneur, Gloire, Patrie." The valiant words rested curiously upon the baby lips, but in an instant the intellect before which the entire world was trembling understood. Honor—Glory—Fatherland—the same in every heart—for which every man must lay down his life, whatever helpless atom he might leave behind him.

There were orders quick and clear and then the pounding hoofs passed on, but around the fields of Mere Craquette was a double cordon composed of the flower of the army, the emperor's personal staff. It was theirs to obey, whether it might be a phalanx of fellow creatures that was to be mowed down, whether it might be a conflagration lighted by their own torches that was to be stayed.

The August moon was well past the full, only a little crescent of gold that preceded by a few hours the rising of the sun. It looked down upon a scorched and smoldering territory. To the north, to the south, to the east and west it stretched, but in the centre stood Bibi's home, the small thatched cottage, surrounded by its field of grain, trampled, perhaps, a little under the feet of its zealous defenders—fallen here and there—but sheltering everywhere clusters of blossoms blue as heaven itself, Bibi's bluets, the Kaiserblumen beloved by the man of war.