

A Practical Plan for a Prairie Town Park

By Archibald Mitchell, Western Lecturer of the Canadian Forestry Association

Editor's Note:—The following article represents a working plan for a prairie town park. It was prepared for the local authorities at Kindersley, Saskatchewan, but with modifications can be adapted to hundreds of Western communities:—

Situated so close to the station, this Park should become a beauty spot and a very great asset to the town. At present it is not. Indeed! with its rows of neglected trees standing among grass, mostly fox-tail, it is an eyesore. A good beginning to grow trees has been made at one time but, as is usual among the smaller towns, the constant cost of upkeep was too great and it fell into neglect. A move in the right direction but not very happy in its execution.

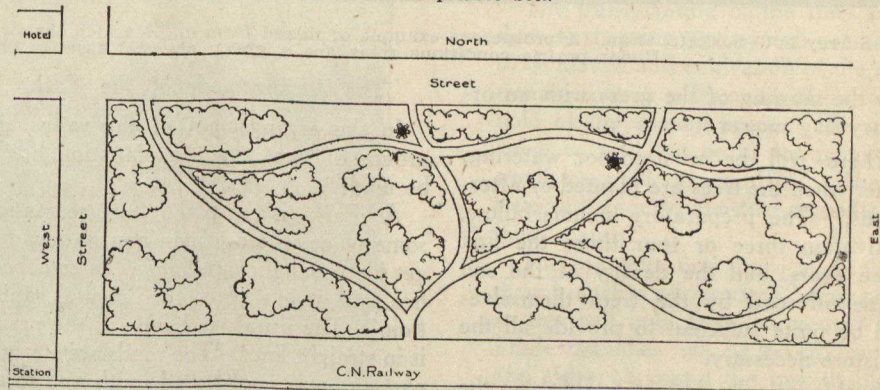
As everyone knows, the outstanding feature of our prairies is the shortage of rainfall. This is recognized in our farm operations and has to be allowed for in all plant growth, be it grain or trees. Moisture must be conserved in the soil for the use of the growing plants by a summer-fallow or some other means, otherwise it escapes to the atmosphere and plants don't grow. In the case of trees, this moisture escape is very much accentuated when grass is allowed to grow among them and exhaust the moisture from the soil. Periodic summerfallow permits the growth of grain crops, and constant cultivation, the growing of trees. But constant cultivation is expensive and very few small towns, or indeed individuals can afford it, and some other means must be found to enable us to conserve sufficient moisture for tree growth. We find this in planting the trees in dense enough masses, close together, and in using such varieties that the branches quickly shade the ground and so preserve the moisture in the soil for the use of the trees and for them alone. This is applying to prairie conditions the principles we find obtaining in the natural forest and this is the principle I am suggesting should be adopted in planting your park.

Solid groups, or islands of trees, dense enough and of size enough, and presenting mass enough to keep the sun and winds from drying out the ground underneath. The trees in the groups must be planted not more than four feet apart each way, as the closer they are the sooner the branches meet and the need for cultivation with its attendant expense will cease. In three years, if good cultivation is carried on, the groups should be beyond all need for further work and the Park of expense, unless for trimming off the edges of the roads and tree islands once a year or so,



BEAUTIFUL PLAYGROUNDS FOR THE CHILDREN AT COALDALE, ALBERTA.

The school on the bare prairies deserves tree-bordered grounds as quickly as man and nature can supply them. At present, too many school boards are content with erecting fine buildings. The prairie province schoolchild is entitled to the same natural beauties that the Ontario or Quebec child enjoys. Nowhere in Canada do trees grow more readily than on prairie soil.



Plan of Park at Kindersley Sask.
- 1920 -



Highly attractive arrangement of tree groups and curved roadways at Dominion Tree Nursery, Indian Head, Sask.