

December 17, 2014

Windbreaks

A well planned shelterbelt provides farmsteads with wind and snow protection as well as providing habitat cover for wildlife.

Now that winter is here, and the snow is blowing through our yards, it is a good time to plan for planting a shelterbelt next spring, by observing where the snow drifts are located. Usually shelterbelts are located on the north and west sides of a farmstead where the prevailing winds are from, but we also have south east winds in the winter that may have to be designed for. Try to keep the inside row at 100 feet from the buildings or feedlot area, so there is room for snow to accumulate before it drifts in the building areas. Generally it takes at least six rows of shrubs/trees to make a well designed shelterbelt, but if space is limited, some trees are better none.

Key components of a well planned shelterbelt are: a minimum of one close spaced shrub row on the outside of the planting to catch snow, tall hardwood trees to help carry the wind over the farmstead, and at least three conifer (pine and spruce) rows on the inside of the planting, for wind, snow protection and habitat for wildlife. A good rule of thumb is that wind protection is at least ten times the height of the mature hardwood trees, therefore when the Maples reach fifty feet in height an area of 500 feet is protected. Try to keep 20 feet between rows, to allow for mowing and maintenance, spacing in row is dependent on the species being planted.

A farmstead with a well designed shelterbelt will provide wind protection and money savings in not having to move all that snow.

If you are interested in having the Todd SWCD come out and visit your site to design a shelterbelt for you, contact our office at 320-732-2644.