

Trees can protect; now is time to order

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Winter weather is upon us, and we are reminded of the value of trees for protecting humans, livestock and wildlife during storms, says Dennis Adams, forester with the Nebraska Forest Service at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“Most people can feel the benefit of a good windbreak when they stand downwind behind the trees,” he said.

Farmers and ranchers planning to plant trees or shrubs for a windbreak, wildlife habitat improvement, erosion control, water quality or other conservation practices in the spring of 2010 should order tree and shrub seedlings now, recommends Adams.

Local natural resources districts or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices are accepting conservation tree and shrub orders for spring planting. NRCS or NRD staff can help develop tree planting plans, and all NRDs offer tree/shrub planting services for a nominal fee.

The NRDs, NRCS and some state agencies offer cost-share programs to help with tree planting costs. Some programs like the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program offer multi-year payments for plantings for riparian buffers, field windbreaks and other conservation practices, said Adams.

“Well planned windbreaks can also provide fuel savings for home or building heating, increase weight gains in cattle, protect calving areas in open range, provide protection and food for wildlife and increase crop production,” Adams said. “Studies show, even considering the cost of land planted in trees and minor yield loss next to a windbreak, that tree protection can result in six to more than a 40% yield increase across the entire field, depending on the crop and growing conditions. Windbreaks are particularly beneficial in drought years.

“The best time to plant conservation trees was 20 years ago the next best time is now.”

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For more information on ordering conservation trees, contact your local Natural Resources District or NRCS office. For more information about conservation programs available from NRCS visit [on-line](#) .