



BLAIR FIELD OFFICE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

fourth edition - April 2021

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES IN THE ARBOR DAY STATE

Some may wonder why NRDs in Nebraska focus so heavily on tree planting programs for a state that is widely viewed as a prairie or grassland state. A closer look into the state's history, the benefits of biodiversity and the ecological impact of trees reveals the important role they play in Nebraska agriculture.

Nineteenth century pioneers found the fertile soil of Nebraska ideal for row cropping and farming. They also quickly found that prairie winds drastically contributed to soil erosion and crop loss. Tree planting popularity began to grow in the mid-1800s as pioneers missed the lush forests they left behind in the East. More importantly, they saw a solution to soil loss and an added benefit of homestead protection in the widespread adoption of windbreaks and shelterbelts.



Photo by Mary Anne Andrei

Shelterbelts were later popularized during the Dust Bowl Era. In 1934, Franklin D Roosevelt allocated \$15 million for the planting of 'forest protection strips' in the Plains to curb soil loss and increase crop yield.³

J. Sterling Morton, former Secretary of the Nebraska Territory, promoted the value of trees and officially introduced a tree planting holiday called 'Arbor Day' to the State Board of Agriculture in January 1872.

The first Arbor Day was celebrated on April 10th, 1872 where prizes were awarded to counties and individuals who planted the most trees that day. It is estimated that more than 1 million trees were planted on the first Arbor Day.¹

"Though founded in Nebraska, we now have members throughout the world," says Ben Heusinkvelt, Orchard Lead at Arbor Day Farms. "The Arbor Day Foundation, and Arbor Day itself, helps people understand the importance of trees and how they play a role in global issues we face."

Today, modern technology makes it possible for us to sculpt the land into terraces, waterways, and basins while also introducing cover crops as a solution to the soil loss and erosion seen by pioneers. However, the biodiversity, wildlife habitat and farmstead benefits of continued tree planting are still important in rural counties. For these reasons, tree planting remains a critical mission for NRDs in the state of Nebraska.



Photo by Justin Novak

To machine plant large amounts of bare-root trees, P-MRNRD staff utilize a tree planter. The planter cuts a furrow into which the trees can be easily placed before the planter packs soil back over the roots.

P-MRNRD TREE PROGRAMS:

Conservation Tree Program: Landowners purchase bare-root trees & shrubs in bundles of 25. P-MRNRD staff are also available to plant the trees/shrubs using our tree planter (pictured above). Orders are taken from November to March each year. Bundles arrive mid-April.

Celebrate Trees Grant Program: Grant program offered for tree planting in public use areas. Applications for the replacement of diseased/dying trees are priority. Grants are awarded to a maximum of \$2,500 per site or \$250 per tree. Applications taken from November to March.



DID YOU KNOW?

Ecologist Suzanne Simard discovered that trees communicate with each other using underground latticed fungi to transfer nutrients. Simard compares the neural networks of the human brain to the complex root systems that exist underneath our footsteps in forests. These communication systems are the reason why a dying tree will push its nutrients down into its roots to benefit neighboring trees after it is gone.²

1 Arbor Day Foundation. The History of Arbor Day. arborday.org

2 Yale School of the Environment. *How and Why Trees Talk to Each Other*.

3 The Weather Channel. *Uprooting FDR's 'Great Wall of Trees.'* Carson Vaughan

2021 SCRAP COMPUTER & ELECTRONICS RECYCLING COLLECTIONS

BLAIR ELECTRONIC WASTE COLLECTION

May 25th, 3pm-6pm

**1060 Wilbur Street
Blair, NE 68008**

Have a junk drawer full of old computer cords and cables? What about an old television that needs to be disposed of properly?

The District's annual Electronic Waste Recycling Collections have been scheduled for 2021! The Blair Field Office will hold their collection May 25th at the field office, 1060 Wilbur Street Blair, NE 68008.

The collection includes free disposal of computers, monitors, printers, cords, keyboards, televisions, DVD/VHS players, radios, phones and small electronic devices. We cannot accept microwaves or large appliances.

Collections are also held in Tekamah, Walthill & Dakota City. Call the office (402) 426-4782 for more information about those collections.

Tribute - Terry's

A Word from Terry Schumacher, Land & Water Programs Coordinator

"Breaking of the wind," that is the intent of a windbreak. Although Nebraska is traditionally thought of as a Prairie State, the men and women who settled in the local area realized the importance of planting trees and establishing windbreaks. Unfortunately, many of the windbreaks established around farmsteads are at or nearing the end of their life.

A good farmstead windbreak can add thousands of dollars to property values and provides many benefits. Some of the benefits such as energy conservation and snow control are the result of wind speed reduction. Other benefits such as wildlife habitat and carbon dioxide reduction are the result of having trees and shrubs in the landscape.

If you are interested in establishing a windbreak or renovating an existing windbreak, there are programs available through the NRD and NRCS. Please contact your local Field Office for assistance. Also, look for some exciting news coming this summer about the forestry programs of the Papio-Missouri River NRD!

FIELD NOTE...



Photo by Chuck Venditte

Cattle and Pheasants supervised as Chuck Venditte, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, completed spot checks in Washington County.

Schumacher Spotlight!

Terry Schumacher has been with the Papio-Missouri River NRD for 29 years! He grew up on a farm in Washington County and went on to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Nebraska Wesleyan University. He then started at the P-MRNRD as a groundskeeper at Chalco Hills.

Terry has had numerous roles with the District over the years including Field Representative and NRCS Soil Conservation Technician. In 2011, he accepted the position of Land & Water Programs Coordinator.

Terry is passionate about conservation. When he's not busy running the field offices or writing his famous "Tribute-Terry's," you can usually find him on his farm south of Kennard with his 30 cow/calf pairs.

