Plan Now (CHECK)…Order Soon (CHECK)…Plant Later…

Over the last two weeks, this space has been devoted to outlining the suggested planning steps for a windbreak planting. If you want to revisit them, check out either column under the Weekly News Articles heading at: https://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/.

At the risk of thinking too far ahead in the process, there is some merit in thinking a little bit about the planting process. In fact, there may even be some steps you can take in preparation of the planting.

If you order trees from the Kansas Forest Service Conservation Tree Planting Program, you’re going to get some excellent information on planting the trees in your order. There will be some slight differences in the pre-planting storage of your plants, so make sure you properly store prior to planting. In most cases, immediate planting is recommended, so plan for delivery or pickup when that will work best for you.

Prior to planting, plan for weed and grass control. Weeds should be controlled for a minimum of three years. Weed barrier fabric is a great option, but mechanical cultivation and herbicides are excellent choices as well. Weeds should be kept below a height of six inches.

Fertilization isn’t usually needed unless planting on a very poor sites. Over-fertilization can cause problems for some species. Only apply when a soil test deems it necessary.

New plantings will need irrigation unless even precipitation through the summer keeps soils moist. Irrigation management requires regular monitoring rather than scheduled watering for best results. Soils should be watered to the point of saturation and then allowed to dry out to a degree before watering again.

If you aren’t using weed barrier fabric, mulching is recommended. A three to four-inch deep mat of old straw, hay, corn cobs, or wood chips approximately 12 to 18 inches around the seedling will reduce competition, conserve soil moisture, and reduce the soil temperature.

Animal damage control should be a consideration as well. Tree tubes are an option, as is caging, to help prevent damage from deer, rabbits, and squirrels hunting for tender vegetation.

Planting a windbreak isn’t easy, but the value they provide to the home or farmstead makes it worth it many times over. For information about getting started, check out Windbreaks for Kansas, available online at: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF2120.pdf or upon request from any District Extension Office.