

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENT (ACRE)

CODE 562

DEFINITION: Establishing grasses, legumes, vines, shrubs, trees, or other plants or selectively reducing stand density and trimming woody plants to improve an area for recreation.

SCOPE: This practice applies on the following condition:

- On any area planned for recreation use.

RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Determine objectives for the site.
- Use specific FOTG standards applicable to the needs of the area:
 - 322–Channel Vegetation
 - 342–Critical Area Planting
 - 666–Forest Stand Improvement
 - 568–Recreation Trail and Walkway
 - 391- Riparian Forest Buffer
 - 612–Tree/Shrub Establishment
 - 660–Tree/Shrub Pruning

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE:

- Control undesirable weed species; especially state-listed noxious weeds.
- Inspect the area and treat all eroded areas, re-seed disturbed areas, and remove any debris and hazardous trees.

Specification MT562-2

Specifications for Recreation Area Planting

1. Refer to TABLES 1 and 2 for species suitable for certain site conditions and uses.
2. Spacing requirements for tree or shrub plantings are:

SPACING REQUIREMENTS		
PLANTING TYPE	VEGETATIVE FORM	SPACE APART
Group or Clump	Shrub	4–8 ft.
	Tree	10–15 ft.
Ornamental or Specimen	Tree	20–25 ft.

3. Plant large broadleaf and evergreen trees at least 25 feet from dwellings when used for ornamentals.
4. Plant trees or shrubs a minimum of 25 feet from any roads.
5. Minimum Planting Stock Grade Specifications:

SPECIES	CALIPER 1-INCH ABOVE ROOT COLLAR (INCHES)	HEIGHT RANGE (INCHES)	AGE (YEARS)
Broadleaf	3/16–3/8	12–24	1–3
Evergreen	1/4–1/2	6–12	2–4

Specifications for Improvement Thinning

1. Plan and layout roads, paths, camping and picnic areas, playgrounds, and other improvements prior to thinning. Plantings should have adequate distance away from roads.
2. In mixed stands of trees and shrubs, favor the most desirable species and specimen plants. Mark trees to be removed before cutting.
3. Remove defective, damaged, poorly formed, and dead trees and shrubs except where they add interest and beauty and do not inhibit the growth and development of more desirable trees.
4. Remove trees that may be a safety hazard.
5. Cut trees to provide optimum shade, density, and free movement for picnic tables, camping areas, trailer parking, and playgrounds. Thin lightly to improve scenic views from picnic areas. Remove enough shrubs for air circulation.
6. Leave trees and shrubs in irregularly spaced clumps forming thickets for screening. Make openings that appear to be natural.
7. Avoid damage to remaining trees and shrubs during thinning operations.
8. Cut tree stumps to ground level. Grub out unwanted shrubs and vines or treat chemically after cutting to prevent resprouting.
9. Protect residual trees and shrubs from traffic injury, livestock, insects, disease, and fire.
10. Leave as large a variety of tree and shrub species as possible to add interest and natural appearance.
11. Remove or burn all slash and debris from thinned area. If burning is done, avoid damage to remaining vegetation. Reseed burn spots to adaptable grasses.
12. Salvage usable material for firewood and other purposes.

Specifications for Improvement Pruning

1. Remove dead and diseased branches from trees and shrubs. Maintain annually.
2. Prune lower tree limbs where necessary to 8 to 12 feet to facilitate movement of people, vehicles, and equestrians.
3. Prune tree limbs where necessary to improve the view. Leave screening shrubs dense. Prune to a minimum of 12 feet over fireplaces and cooking areas.
4. Use a saw for pruning trees. Cut branches close to the trunk, but avoid scarring the bark.
5. Perform pruning in the late winter or early spring while the plants are still dormant.

To reduce fire hazard and improve appearances, remove dead and down material within 100 to 150 feet beyond the intensively improved area.

Specification 562-4

TABLE I. Recreation Area Planting—Trees, Shrubs, and Evergreens

SHRUBS	NATIVE OR INTRODUCED	PRINCIPAL USES				SITE ADAPTABILITY			GROWTH* RATE
		SHADE	SCREEN OR BARRIERS	SPECIAL FEATURES	WELL DRAINED	DROUGHTY	LOW, WET	SUN OR SHADE	
American plum	N		x	Flowers, fruit	x			Sun	Fast
Caragana	I		x	Flowers	x	x		Both	Fast
Chokecherry	N		x	Flowers, fruit	x			Sun	Medium
Common lilac	I		x	Flowers	x			Both	Slow
Hybrid lilac	I		x	Flowers	x			Both	Slow
Cotoneaster	I		x	Fruit, color	x			Sun	Medium
Dogwood	N		x	Color			x	Both	Fast
Golden currant	N		x	Flowers, fruit	x	x		Both	Medium
Honeysuckle	I		x	Flowers, fruit	x	x		Sun	Fast
Japanese barberry	I		x	Color	x			Sun	Slow
Mockorange	N		x	Flowers	x	x		Sun	Medium
Nanking cherry	I		x	Flowers, fruit	x			Sun	Medium
Ninebark	N		x	Flowers	x		x	Both	Medium
Potentilla	N		x	Flowers	x		x	Sun	Slow
Rugosa roses	N		x	Flowers	x			Sun	Medium
Saskatoon serviceberry	N		x	Flowers	x			Both	Medium
Silverberry	N		x	Flowers, fruit			x	Both	Fast
Silver buffaloberry	N		x	Fruit, color	x	x	Slightly saline	Sun	Slow
Skunkbush sumac	N		x	Flowers	x	x		Sun	Medium
Spirea	N		x	Flowers	x			Both	Medium
Willows	N		x	Foliage			x	Sun	Fast
EVERGREENS									
Western red cedar	N	x	x	Evergreen			x	Both	Slow
Austrian pine	I	x	x	Evergreen	x	x		Sun	Medium
Colorado spruce	I	x	x	Evergreen, color	x	x		Sun	Slow
Common juniper	N		x	Evergreen	x	x	x	Both	Slow
Douglas fir	N	x	x	Evergreen	x			Both	Medium
Mugho pine	I		x	Evergreen	x	x		Sun	Slow
Ponderosa pine	N	x	x	Evergreen	x	x		Sun	Medium
Rocky Mountain juniper	N		x	Evergreen	x	x	Slightly saline	Both	Slow
Scotch pine	I	x	x	Evergreen	x	x		Sun	Medium
TREES									
American elm	N	x			x			Sun	Medium
Aspen	N	x			x		x	Sun	Fast
Basswood (Linden)	I	x			x			Sun	Medium
Bur oak	N	x			x	x		Sun	Slow
Flowering crabapples	I	x	x	Flowers	x			Sun	Slow
Green ash	N	x			x	x		Both	Slow
Honeylocust	I	x		Foliage	x	x		Sun	Fast
Cottonwood	N	x					x	Sun	Fast
Mountain ash	I	x		Fruit	x			Sun	Slow
Paper birch	I	x		Foliage	x			Sun	Slow
Siberian crabapple	I	x	x	Flowers, fruit	x	x		Sun	Medium
Siberian elm	I	x	x		x	x		Sun	Fast
Golden willow	I	x		Color			x	Sun	Fast

* GROWTH RATE DEPENDS ON SITE FACTORS, CARE, ETC.

TABLE II. Recreation Area Planting—Grasses and Legumes

SPECIES TO PLANT	NATIVE OR INTRODUCED PRINCIPAL USE	SUN OR SHADE	TRAMPLING TOLERANCE	SITE ADAPTATION			GROWTH HABIT	SEEDING RATE LBS./AC.
				WET	WELL DRAINED	DROUGHTY		
Alfalfa	I	Sun	Low	Poor	Good	Poor	Clump	10
	Firebreak strips							
Bluegrass, Kentucky	I	Both	Medium	Good	Fair	Poor	Rhizome	6
	Camp and picnic grounds							
Blue grama	N	Sun	High	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	6
	Sports areas/ball diamonds							
Buffalograss (E)	N	Sun	High	Poor	Good	Good	Stolon	8
	Open areas subject to trampling							
Brome, smooth	I	Sun	Medium	Fair	Good	Fair	Rhizome	10
	Unimproved grounds, open areas							
Bluestem, little	N	Sun	Medium	Fair	Good	Fair	Bunch	8
	Open fields or hunting grounds							
Fescue, tall	I	Both	Medium	Good	Good	Fair	Bunch	12
	Unimproved grounds/open areas							
Fescue, hard	I	Both	Medium	Fair	Good	Fair	Bunch	6
	Firebreaks, camp							
Fescue, sheep	N	Both	Medium	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	6
	Firebreaks, camp							
Foxtail, creeping	N	Sun	Medium	Good	Poor	Poor	Rhizome	6
	Saline tolerant							
Orchardgrass	I	Both	High	Poor	Good	Fair	Bunch	6
	Unimproved shady areas							
Reed canarygrass	N	Sun	Medium	Good	Fair	Poor	Rhizome	8
	Low, wet areas							
Ricegrass, Indian	N	Sun	Low	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	12
	Good looking							
Ryegrass, Italian	I	Both	High	Fair	Good	Poor	Bunch	12
	Improved shady grounds							
Ryegrass, perennial	I	Both	High	Poor	Good	Poor	Bunch	8
	Quick temporary ground cover							
Sedge, beaked	N	Sun	Medium	Good	Poor	Poor	Rhizome	5
	Most common sedge							
Sedge, Nebraska	N	Sun	Medium	Good	Poor	Poor	Rhizome	5
	Alkaline tolerant							
Sideoats grama*	N	Sun	Low	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	6
	Unimproved grounds/open slopes							
Wheatgrass, bluebunch	N	Sun	Low	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	14
	Slow establishment							
Wheatgrass, crested	I	Sun	High	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	10
	Lawns on dryland							
Wheatgrass, streambank	N	Sun	High	Fair	Good	Good	Rhizome	10
	For dry, disturbed, infertile areas							
Wheatgrass, thickspike	N	Sun	Medium	Poor	Good	Good	Rhizome	10
	Dry disturbed sandy							
Wheatgrass, western	N	Sun	High	Good	Fair	Poor	Rhizome	12
	Sports areas							
White sweetclover	I	Sun	Medium	Fair	Good	Poor	Stolon	8
	Mix with grasses for good clover							
Wildrye, basin	N	Sun	Low	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	12
Wildrye, Russian	I	Sun	Medium	Poor	Good	Good	Bunch	12
	Dryland lawn							

* SUITED TO EASTERN MONTANA ONLY.