

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Box 270, Bismarck, North Dakota 58502  
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TECHNICAL NOTE - ECS - FORESTRY ND-4

Some Methods of Protecting Young Evergreen Plantings

North Dakota needs more evergreens--especially in farmstead, feedlot and wildlife plantings. Some may be desirable in field windbreak systems. Observations have shown in most cases that evergreen planting stock was good to excellent, but mortality occurred after the trees were planted.

The following reasons for survival failure and methods for correcting such particularly apply to bare-rooted stock:

Smothering with soil has killed more evergreens than all other causes combined. Covering with soil, even the lower branches, is harmful to evergreens. Any needles covered with soil during the planting operation should immediately be uncovered, or they will rot within two weeks. This should also be done after each cultivation--at least during the first 2 to 3 years after planting. Most evergreens should be planted a little shallower than hardwoods.

The second most harmful factor in evergreen survival and growth is winter-burn. This injury is more severe some winters, but is always a threat to successful evergreen plantings. Winter-burn can be greatly reduced or eliminated if one of the following is done.

1. Plant a row or two of corn or sorghum on both sides of the evergreen row. It should be left standing to act as a snow catch. If snowfall is sufficient the trees would be covered by snow all winter. It will also protect the young evergreens from strong winds.
2. Annual weeds are beneficial if allowed to grow in late summer (after August 1st) around each evergreen to give partial shade protection. The weeds also tend to catch the early snowfall which is beneficial for protection. Too much weed growth is not desirable as it might attract mice and girdling could occur over winter.
3. Shingles may be used on south and west sides of the evergreens for protection from wind and sun.
4. Strips of burlap tacked on stakes may be used on two sides of each evergreen for protection from hot winds and bright sunshine--south and west sides preferred.
5. Place a handful of straw on top of each evergreen immediately after planting. This provides partial shade to the evergreens for several days, and normally by that time the wind would have blown most of it away. This also gives the tree roots time to become established.
6. If soil is dry at planting time, watering of each evergreen is essential.

Where chemical weed control is used the use of one or more of the above methods is essential in protecting the evergreens during winter.

It takes extra effort and careful handling of evergreens to produce the best results, but this effort and care are well worth it.