

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**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.

**PURPOSE**

To increase the attractiveness and usefulness of recreation areas and to protect the soil and plant resources.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On any areas planned for recreation use

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATIONS**

**RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENT**

(Acre)

**CODE 562**

**CLEAN UP**

Remove debris, litter, and slash from the area. All burning, if done, will comply with local and state laws. Extreme caution will be exercised to avoid burn and/or heat damage to existing vegetation. All fires will be located far enough away from trees and shrubs to prevent heat damage to them.

**VEGETATION**

**Trees, shrubs, and vines**

**Species.** Suitable and adapted species should be selected from Section II of the field office technical guide or recommendations of appropriate specialist followed.

**Time of planting.** Plant between December 1 and March 31.

**Site preparation.** A minimum of 18-inch diameter circle around each plant should be free of competitive vegetation. Do not plant trees, shrubs or vines in bermudagrass.

**Spacing.** Distance between plants and rows of plants will be based on the functional use of the planting and the ultimate size of the species used. Generally, shade trees and specimen plants will be spaced far enough apart to permit full crown development. Screen, windbreak, and traffic-barrier plants will be closely spaced.

**Maintenance.** Competitive vegetation will be controlled until the plant is large enough to shade out the competitive vegetation.

### Grasses and legumes

**Species.** Heavy-traffic areas – bermudagrass, buffalograss. Moderate- and low-traffic areas - native grass mixtures, fescue, lovegrass, sericea, lespedeza, bahiagrass, buffalograss, bermudagrass, caucasian bluestem, plains bluestem, clovers, lespedezas.

**Planting rates, area of adaptation, and planting dates.** Refer to Pasture Planting or Range Seeding Specifications.

**Fertilization.** Fertilize as needed to assure rapid plant establishment.

**Site preparation.** The seedbed should be smooth, firm, and free of competitive vegetation. When weed competition is expected to endanger the establishment of an adequate vegetative cover, appropriate mechanical or chemical measures will be used.

**Maintenance.** Apply fertilizer at local maintenance rates indicated by soil test. Mow as needed to maintain plant vigor and an aesthetic and usable area.

### PRUNING AND THINNING TREES AND SHRUBS

Pruning will be done where necessary to improve the view or appearance of an area, to allow for movement of people and equipment, to locate recreation facilities, to reduce shade, or to improve plant vigor.

#### Pruning

**Time.** (A) Elms, birch, dogwood, and maples should be pruned after the trees are in full leaf. Pruning these species in late winter or early spring causes profuse bleeding. (B) Deciduous trees, except elms, birch, dogwood

and maples, may be pruned at any season. However, pruning early in the spring when the leaves reach full size allows one to visualize the effect that pruning will have on the form of the tree. The wounds also begin to heal immediately at this time of the year. (C) Evergreens normally do not need pruning, except to remove dead or damaged limbs. This can be done during any season.

**Method.** (A) Perform pruning with a saw or pruning shears, never an axe. (B) Cut branches and limbs flush with trunk or main branch. (C) Prune tree limbs 8 to 12 feet high where necessary to facilitate movement of people and equipment. Never prune more than 1/2 the total height of a tree.

#### Thinning

**Time.** Thinning existing trees and shrubs will be done following site selection for the recreation facilities, including roads and trails.

**Method.** (A) Select the most desirable species for leave trees. Damaged and diseased trees should be selected first for removal. (B) Spacing: <sup>1</sup>Leave clumped belts of trees closely spaced where screening is desired. <sup>2</sup>In areas where more openness is desired, space trees 4 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) and less approximately 10 feet apart. Space trees 5 inches dbh and over at D+D spacing. (Example: 10 inch dbh trees should be spaced at 10+10 or 20 feet apart.). (C) Cut trees flush with the ground and fell in a manner that will not damage leave trees. (D) Do not thin trees with a dozer.

### DO NOT FILL OR LOWER THE GRADE AROUND LEAVE TREES