

This column features questions from landowners submitted via the Web site. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards and Backyards*!

ask Sam



question

Sam,

We're in deep winter and, as I look outside, snow is blowing past our window. We have not yet planted trees for a windbreak at our place. Are there any options available that could provide quick wind protection? I've seen advertisements for "quick-growing trees." Are these an option to have until the trees we plan to plant are big enough?

Ralph – Laramie

Dear Ralph,

I think you are taking the right approach in planting fast-growing and more moderate- to slow-growing trees at the same time. But be forewarned – there is no free lunch! Fast-growing trees have the ability to, well, grow fast, particularly in the first 10 years of their life and then usually succumb to disease and insects under our Wyoming conditions. Fast-growing trees also need abundant water to support this growth. As you plan for a windbreak, consider the time when the trees will need replacing, and be sure to provide adequate amounts of water – more so than the slower-growing trees and shrubs that will eventually become the backbone of your windbreak. All that said, the most advertised tree is the Austree®, a willow hybrid with claims of growing upwards of 15 feet per year. Another fast growing tree is the golden willow. In central Wyoming, we compared the growth rate of both trees and found them similar, putting on 8 to 12 feet of growth a year. But after 15 years, both species had to be removed from the windbreak because of excessive dieback caused by disease and insects. Your local conservation district, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, or Wyoming State Forestry Division district offices are good places to seek information on selecting appropriate trees and shrubs for a windbreak planting. They can also help design a windbreak so it won't cause unwanted snowdrifts on roadways or even next to your home foundation. The UW CES has bulletins on recommended trees and shrubs for Wyoming at http://ces.uwyo.edu/PUBS/Horticulture/Horticulture_Publications_Main.htm.

Start planning now – spring is right around the corner!

Sam



answer