



featured

Small acreage near Powell shows how

By Sandra Frost
and Steven L. Miller

Transplants to Wyoming from the Garden State of New Jersey have worked with the 6- to 7-inch annual precipitation of the Powell area to create a haven for themselves.

Cindy and Dave Rose purchased five acres of fallow farm land in 1998 south of Powell and two years later added five acres more.

They moved to Powell from New Jersey in 1998, where they had owned a steep, heavily wooded, one-half acre lot teeming with wildlife. To attain that wildlife haven-esque atmosphere again in Wyoming, they planted more than 400 trees and shrubs on their original five acres.

"Moving from the most densely populated state to the least populated state, we wanted to make sure we had plenty of elbow room," says Cindy, a full-time private caregiver. "If we were to live in Wyoming, we were not going to live in town. That was the motivation – to have plenty of room and space and enjoy the outdoors."



A curved driveway screens the house and provides habitat for wildlife.

The home is just about centered among the trees and shrubs on their first five acres. The couple's goals for their acreage were simple. "We wanted our home to have a view of the McCullough Peaks to the south," says Dave, who owns and operates Audio Tech Transfer, specializing in transferring sound tracks from old audio formats to modern CDs. For an added Wyoming ambience, the Shoshone River is 200 yards from their house, but not on their property.

"Our first goal was to have traditional landscaping around the house," says Dave. "We designed a curved driveway to screen

the view to the east and to provide shelter and habitat for animals. Our second, later goal, was to get rid of noxious weeds, in particular Russian knapweed that infested the property in dense patches."

The couple eventually planted low-growing shrubs to the south so their view of McCullough Peaks would not become obstructed. Trees provide shelter on the west and north and block views to their property from a neighbor to the east.

The property had 12 Siberian elms when purchased. The couple dramatically increased the number of trees.

"We planted more than 400 trees and shrubs – hand-dug every hole!" says Cindy. Most were bare-root starts from the Cody Conservation District, and some were from a local nursery in 1- and 5-gallon pots. Dave maintains a spreadsheet of genus and species, their common name, where purchased, when planted, and how many of each. Species include junipers, pine, cottonwood, green ash, honeylocust, quaking aspen, Colorado spruce, bur oak, sand cherry, currant, lilac, and potentilla, among many others.

"When we planted seedlings, we placed a

landowners

couple overcome Wyoming challenges

3-foot square of weed barrier with gravel mulch around each tree,” Dave says. “The barrier prevents water evaporation as well as weeds. Gravel mulch is necessary to hold the weed barrier in the wind.”

During warm spells in the winter, the couple carried water to each small seedling. “The second year, we added a general fertilizer in granular form to each tree seedling at a rate of a little more than a tablespoon per tree,” says Cindy. “Dave usually checks each tree at least monthly and gives them a pruning if needed.”

Of new plantings, there is about a 5 percent or less loss each winter, says Dave. Causes include deer and plant species not hardy enough for the weather extremes. Once established, he says, the trees and shrubs have proven hardy and vigorous.

“We didn’t really plant them in straight rows but more of a forest type of approach at random,” says Dave. “We mixed some bur oaks in with cottonwoods, some hackberry and pines – a very random and natural approach. It was ‘let’s plant

a clump of aspens there and how about a cottonwood behind them and a couple of blue spruces behind them.’ The trees are very nice. I’m looking forward to having 40- to 50-foot trees in five to 10 years.”

Their landscaping provided several challenges. “We hired a landscape company to put in drip irrigation and finish the area around the house,” says Cindy. “The topsoil around the house was poor. The landscape company seeded Kentucky bluegrass around the house.”

The high-water-use

bluegrass died due to lack of moisture. Prior to 2005, water was available only when surrounding farmers began flood irrigating, usually in late April or early May. “We did not have enough water available to give it sprinkler irrigation to get it up,” she says, “and sprinkler irrigation is needed to get the grass up.”

“Since then, we purchased and planted a 50-pound sack of mixed, drought-tolerant grasses, which have done well,” says Dave. Species included western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass,



Landscaping near the Rose home. Right, the couple planted more than 400 trees since their purchase of the property in 1998.



blue grama, buffalograss, Arizona fescue, Canada wildrye, and Canby bluegrass.

Their landscaping effort was helped when they were able to change the water source in 2005. The couple had used a 14-foot well fed by local flood irrigation in farm fields to drip irrigate trees. The couple began using water from the subdivision irrigation pipeline in 2005. A three-horsepower pump and 2-inch tubing with risers uses 21 sprinklers to deliver water. The trees are on sprinkler irrigation now.

"We have five full days of water in every two-week period," says Cindy. "The planted areas are divided into three watering zones. Each zone receives sufficient water to fully meet the needs of the trees and shrubs. There has been a dramatic increase in tree growth with the new system."

Irrigation and disturbances around the trees proved a hotbed for weeds.

When the grasses were established and trees reached a certain size, weeds were less of a problem.

They rely on herbicides to control weeds in the grass. "We spot-sprayed weeds around the trees with Roundup," says Dave. "The Park County Weed and Pest Control District



Dave Rose with a Canada red cherry planted in 1999 from a bare-root seedling.

suggested we use Redeem and Milestone to control the Russian knapweed. It took three years to eradicate the dense patches we had."

The couple have seen an increase in wildlife using their newly created habitat. Cindy says deer, owls, pheasants, fox, and other wildlife now visit their acreage for a new home.

Their migration was rather like those of the couple's family to the area. Dave's brother, Andy, moved to Powell in the early 1990s. Their father, Vince, followed in 1997, and Cindy and Dave followed to work for Vince. Cindy has nieces attending

Northwest College, and one brother, Dave, who moved to Cody in 2007.

Cindy talks about the differences between New Jersey and Wyoming. In New Jersey, "People are in a hurry; everything is locked. Carjacking was becoming prevalent in New Jersey before we left, and I used to get in my car at my house and lock the doors," she says. "I miss the variety of restaurants, and the culture of people of different nationalities and colors. I miss pizza and bagels. But this was such a positive move in a lot of ways. We moved to a much better place to

live. It's prettier here. New Jersey has pretty areas, but it's cleaner here, less litter, and almost no graffiti. There are so many positive factors."

But, if buying an acreage, be prepared to spend a lot of time maintaining and improving it, Dave and Cindy say, and spending money for pumps and irrigation.

The best part of having an acreage, Cindy says, "is the solitude, beautiful views, and space. This was our first house we built. We could do anything we wanted, and it was so exciting!"

Sandra Frost is a University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) educator serving Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, Teton, and Washakie counties. She can be reached at (307) 754-8836 or sfrost1@uwyo.edu. Steven L. Miller is senior editor with UW CES. He can be reached at (307) 766-6342 or slmiller@uwyo.edu.