Clean up the AIR and help the environment!

M any rural and urban landowners in Wyoming can purchase low-cost tree seedlings to plant windbreaks that can help remove carbon dioxide from the air, save energy, control erosion, offer habitat for wildlife, and protect buildings, crops, and livestock.

The trees can be ordered from University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) and local conservation district offices. Some restrictions may apply. Those interested are urged to contact their local offices. (See page 5.)

Trees and shrubs cool in the summer and reduce wind chill in the winter. An effective windbreak on three sides of a building can reduce annual fuel costs by as much as 30 percent. Summer air temperatures in tree shade can be as much as 25 degrees F cooler than in direct sun.

Properly located windbreaks and shelterbelts can act as snow fences by preventing drifts from accumulating on roads and near buildings. (See Winter 2006 "Trees – A natural solution to snow problems.") Tree barriers also provide cover and food for deer, small mammals, and pheasants, grouse, and other birds, and they provide nesting places for small, insect-eating birds. Use care when designing a windbreak, and seek help from local experts. (See page 5.)

Wyoming residents can order trees at a nominal cost, from about 80 cents to $1.80 each through the first part of April, with delivery the last part of April or the first part of May. Bare-root seedling trees are approximately 6 to 30 inches high. In some areas of the state, lot purchases with a minimum number of plants are required (check with your local office for details). There are more than 40 different species to choose from, including shrubs, deciduous trees, and evergreens.

Many of the shrubs have edible berries for wildlife consumption. There are also many to choose from that will produce berries for jams and jellies.

Some of my favorite shrubs and trees include golden currant, sumac, New Mexico privet, bur oak, and Rocky Mountain juniper. All these do well in Wyoming; however, some are more adapted to certain locations, and local UW CES and conservation district offices can give advice on which species work best in a location. They also have planting and spacing information.

Do not be afraid to plant small trees or shrubs, as research shows that over a 10-year period these small trees will generally outgrow larger balled-and-burlap or container plants planted at the same time. Research also shows root establishment takes at least one year per inch diameter of the tree. This is one reason why larger trees seem to not grow for several years.

The key for faster growth is keeping weeds and

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Plant a windbreak

grass away from trees and shrubs for the first 10 years and providing adequate moisture.

Some nurseries do not carry seedling stock or some of the native varieties that are provided through local UW CES and conservation district offices, so this can be an economical way to get a windbreak started. The plants come from the Colorado State Forest Service nursery in Fort Collins, Colorado. The stock is available on a first-order basis and is limited. For more tree planting information, see Fall 2006 "Conservation trees: Planning for success" and Spring 2005 "Successful tree planting strategies," also available at www.barnyardsandbackyards.com

Planting proper windbreaks

Organizations that can help plan a windbreak include the Wyoming State Forestry Division, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Wyoming conservation districts, and the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service.

A listing of Wyoming State Forestry Division offices can be found at http://slf-web.state.wy.us/forestry/offices.aspx.

NRCS offices can be found at http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app.

Wyoming conservation district offices can be found at www.conservewy.com/wacd/districts/index.html.

A listing of UW CES offices is online at http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp.