



State Nursery Program

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Planting for Wildlife Habitat

You have the opportunity to improve your land for wildlife by planting a [wildlife packet](#) from the Wisconsin state nursery program. The packet contains the key components of a woody cover planting: 200 shrubs to catch snow and provide food and cover, and 100 conifers, whose dense leaves and branches provide overhead insulation needed by wildlife during cold winter months.

Suitable Location

The first step in the establishment of good wildlife habitat is proper site location. Some factors to consider:

- Relationship to other habitat components--** Cover plantings placed in any odd corner of a farm or property will attract some form of wildlife during the lifetime of the planting. However, if the placement of these plantings is done with recognition given to existing travel lanes, good undisturbed nesting cover, proximity to wetlands, or food and watering areas - then the payoff in diverse and abundant wildlife use will be great. Ideally, winter food such as corn stubble or a planted corn food plot should be located within 100 yards of the cover planting and preferably downwind. This provides easy access to food with a minimum of exposure to predators and winter weather. Adjacent, undisturbed grassy or herbaceous cover will provide insect food and secure nesting.
- Exposure--**One of the primary benefits of a well-located cover planting is relief from periods of stress such as mid-winter winds. In Wisconsin, severe north and west facing slopes should be avoided. East, south, and moderately sloping west facing sites are preferred. The better the sunlight on these sites, the better the flowering and fruit development.
- Soils--**Most of the shrub species available today require well-drained, loamy soils for best development and growth. Avoid very shallow soils (6" or less to bedrock), droughty, or sandy soils with very low fertility, and excessively wet or poorly drained soils.
- Existing permanent cover--**There may be opportunities to use your wildlife packet to enhance existing cover such

as old farm groves, fencelines, shrub wetlands, or other woody cover areas. However, some open grassland areas are better left unplanted. Consult with your local wildlife manager for recommendations.

When enhancing woody cover, some existing trees and shrubs may, if left unchecked, limit the development of the planting. Small trees such as elm and box elder will grow faster than the planting and eventually become "wolf" trees, whose shade and competition will greatly lower the growth and vigor of your planting. Unwanted trees and shrubs should be removed prior to planting. Most Wisconsin deciduous trees and shrubs are prolific sprouters and in one year can grow 3-5 feet from cut stumps. To prevent sprouting, it's best to treat the stump with a recommended herbicide.

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A Planting Plan

The arrangement of shrubs and trees in a planting can greatly affect its attractiveness to wildlife. For example, depending on exposure, it's advisable to plant one or two rows of shrubs on the windward side of your planting to trap snow. Conversely, it is advantageous to have at least 2 rows on the downwind or protected side to provide resting or sunning areas.

Square planting designs are preferable to a long, thin planting. The blocky shape should provide an area to catch the snow on the north and west sides of the planting with inner rows of conifers to provide shelter from weather and predators. Plant species in groups with adequate spacing so that no one species will predominate and out compete the others.

The ideal planting design for your wildlife packet is illustrated in Figure 1. It consists of a 12-row planting 200 feet long and 165 feet wide (about 3/4 of an acre). This design has two rows of dense shrubs on the windward side to catch snow. The 35-foot gap between the first two rows of shrubs and row 3 serves as an area for snow to be deposited without burying the inner rows of trees. Additional shrubs and conifers are planted downwind to provide food, cover, sunning, and loafing areas. Alternatively, you can plant your packet in clumps scattered around the farm as illustrated in Figure 2. Refer to [Table I](#) for additional information on recommended species and spacing for your wildlife planting.

Figure 1: Cross section of a 12 row woody planting

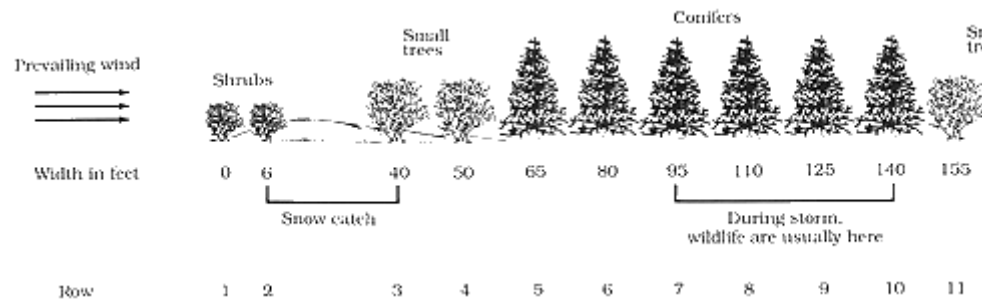


Figure 2: Example of clump planting for wildlife

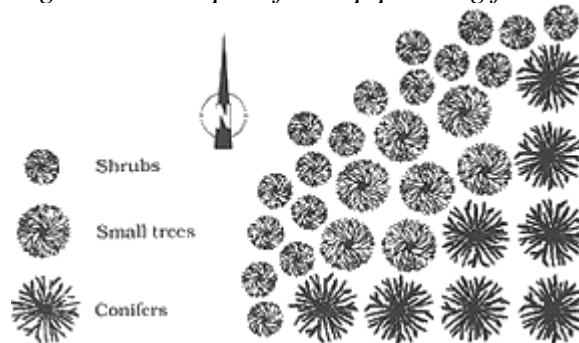


Table 1: Recommended species and spacing for woody cover wildlife plantings

Shrubs: space plants 4' apart in rows and 6' apart between rows

- American hazelnut
- American highbush cranberry
- Gray dogwood
- Red-osier dogwood
- Ninebark

Small Trees: space plants 8' apart in rows and 10' apart between rows

- Mixed crab
- Sargent crab
- Thornapple
- Wild plum

Conifers: space plants 12' apart in rows and 15' apart between rows

- Norway spruce
- White spruce

Site Preparation

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