

Windbreak Award

This year's winner of the Windbreak award is Mona Peck, for her family's tree project that has been put in around their homestead.

This award is selected on the following criteria:

- a. The primary purpose of the windbreak(s) will be to provide protection from damaging winds for residential (or other structures) areas, livestock, or fields.
- b. The original windbreak must consist of planted trees or shrubs. Volunteer trees shrubs may be utilized to increase density, fill in gaps, or otherwise supplement the original planted trees and shrubs.
- c. The plants must be managed and in healthy condition with no significant gaps in the windbreaks.
- d. Windbreak location, density, and length must be adequate to provide the desired protection.
- e. Windbreaks should be a minimum of three years old.

The Peck's windbreak was started roughly 30 years ago and is on the west edge of Dighton.

For those that have not taken a look at the windbreak they have established, they have put a lot of work into it over the years. When they first began working on the project, Mona says her and her late husband Greg wanted to protect the house from the north winds, so they planted the windbreak north of the house to start. She mentioned she still doesn't quite know why the windbreak on the south side of the yard was put in, other than her husband just wanted to plant some trees.

The tree rows are made up of both trees and shrubs, and is almost L shaped wrapping around the farm yard. The north side is made up of cedars. While the south side is made up of burr oak, Russian olive, and sumac.

To get the windbreak started, plastic weed barrier was put down to help keep the grass and weeds under control. Then, Greg began using a post hole digger to plant each individual tree. The later trees were eventually put in by a tractor, but that's only after a large majority were done by hand. A drip line was then installed and run for the first several years after planting the seedlings.

As I mentioned, the trees started as bare root seedlings between 6 inches and a foot tall, and have grown to over 20 feet tall. When conditions are dry, Mona still waters with sprinklers to keep enough moisture, since the coyotes and other critters have destroyed the drip line.

The biggest benefits they have seen from the windbreak, is that they have done a great job slowing down the wind from the house. The tree rows have also been able to catch some of the snow before coming into the yard. The windbreak has also provided protection to not only the nearby livestock, but it has been nice to see some pheasants, quail, and other wildlife come in for cover, including the occasional fox.

Mona mentioned that at the time it was a lot of work, but it has paid off. She also added that if anybody has a good way to keep rabbits away or from chewing up the trees, other than wrapping them in aluminum foil, which she is sure her neighbors appreciate after windy days, she is looking for help.

Will you please welcome Mona Peck to accept this award!