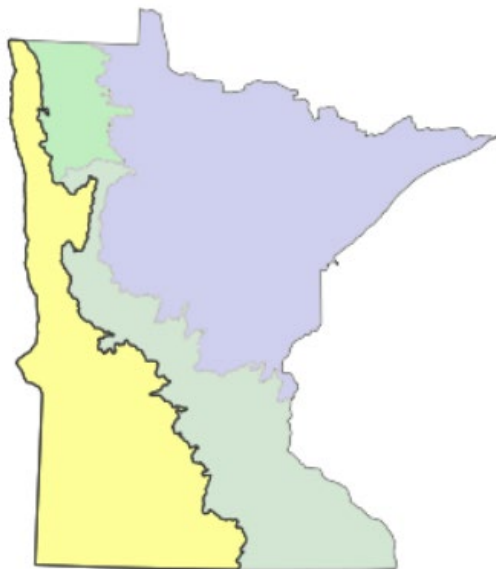


# RIM Tree/Shrub Plantings in the Prairie Region Guidelines

## Purpose

The purpose of the Tree/Shrub Plantings practices (RR-3a and RR-4a) is to establish and provide a balanced and diverse blend of wildlife habitat that will control erosion and enhance wildlife habitat. This practice serves to improve wildlife habitat, complement other habitats, or increase the availability of key habitat types that are lacking in abundance or quality.



1 Prairie Parkland Province highlighted in yellow

In the Prairie Region of the state, vegetation was historically dominated by tallgrass prairie experiencing severe spring fire seasons that favored grassland over forest vegetation. Forests were restricted to riparian corridors and other sites where water bodies or topographic breaks reduced the spread and severity of fire. Because of this, tree/shrub plantings on sites that were historically prairie should be carefully planned with specific habitat goals in mind that cannot be otherwise met through grassland ecosystems. There may be scenarios where tree/shrub plantings are not feasible due to historic habitat, site conditions, grassland quality, adjacency to ecologically sensitive sites, or tree/shrub species availability and preference. The SWCD must provide reasoning why a tree/shrub planting is needed. Landowners in these areas should be encouraged to first fulfill wildlife needs through the establishment and management of diverse, dynamic grasslands restorations.

Tree/shrub plantings that were approved by BWSR before April 2026 are not subject to this guidance. Any requests for new tree/shrub plantings must follow this guidance.

## Policies and Practices

1. No cost-sharing is authorized for this practice within the Prairie Region of the state where the vegetation was historically grassland. This applies to both new and existing easements.
  - a. There may be limited opportunities available for cost-share for the installation of pollinator plantings that contain flowering shrubs.
2. Species selection must be based on soil types using the [Minnesota Conservation Tree Shrub Group Guide](#). Reach out to local NRCS staff for assistance on using this Guide, if needed. Additional approval is needed if selecting species not listed within the Conservation Tree and Shrub Group.
  - a. Species must be native to the county. [USDA's PLANTS Database](#) can be used to determine species origin.
  - b. Cultivars are not allowed.
3. Guidance in the [Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines: Section 2 General Planning Considerations](#) should be followed for selecting seed and plant source.

4. Permanent vegetative cover within the woody planting must be native and meet the RR-2 practice standards.
5. Due to its invasive tendency, Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is not allowed.

## Technical Requirements

The following requirements must be followed when planning tree/shrub establishment. Some sites may not support tree/shrub plantings for unique reasons outside the requirements below, and BWSR may deny those requests. Consideration should be given to neighboring land types and use.

1. Tree/shrub plantings may be installed only where **no existing winter wildlife habitat cover is present within ½ mile**. Winter wildlife habitat cover is defined as either:
  - a. A contiguous wetland of at least 10 acres; OR
  - b. At least 3 acres of existing contiguous woody cover, regardless of type or age.
2. Tree/shrub plantings may not be located on or adjacent to remnant prairie. A buffer of at least 30 feet from the remnant is required.
3. Tree/shrub plantings may not be located within 3 miles of a known greater prairie chicken lek.
  - a. This data is accessible via the State Special Concern Species layer on the NRCS server. Contact local NRCS or BWSR staff for assistance accessing this data.
4. Tree/shrub plantings must not be located in RR-8 Wetland Restoration or RR-13 Existing Wetland practice areas. A buffer of at least 30 feet from the wetland is required.
5. Tree/shrub plantings must not be located in areas that would interfere with the maintenance of public drainage systems, road right-of-ways, and public utilities.
6. If no alternative locations are available and a desired tree/shrub planting is requested within a prohibited location, SWCD staff must provide valid reasoning why the tree/shrub planting cannot be placed elsewhere. BWSR reserves the right to deny those requests.
7. Follow the planting rates and spacing as described in the [MN NRCS 612 – Tree/Shrub Establishment Guidance Document](#).

## Species Allowed

Taken from [MN NRCS 612 – Tree/Shrub Establishment Guidance Document](#).

<u>Conifers</u>				
Balsam fir	Black Spruce	Northern white cedar	Eastern white pine	Jack pine
	Red pine	Tamarack	White spruce	
<u>Deciduous trees</u>				
Bigtooth aspen	Quaking aspen	Paper birch	Yellow birch	Bitternut hickory
Black walnut	Black cherry	Pin cherry	Eastern cottonwood	Green ash
Hackberry	Mountain maple	Red maple	Sugar maple	Bur oak
Northern pin oak	Northern red oak	Swamp white oak	White oak	Shagbark hickory
<u>Deciduous shrubs</u>				
American plum	American hazelnut	Arrow-wood	Chokeberry	Chokecherry
Grey dogwood	Red-osier dogwood	Silky dogwood	False indigo	Hawthorn
Highbush cranberry	Lead plant	Nannyberry	New Jersey tea	Ninebark
Serviceberry	Silver buffaloberry	Smooth sumac	Staghorn suman	Willow species

## Tree/Shrub Planting Size

The minimum tree/shrub planting size is 0.5 acres.

Easement size	Maximum total tree/shrub acres*	Total number of tree/shrub planting plots allowed
0-100 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 5 acres	2
100-200 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 10 acres	3
200+ acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 20 acres	4

*\*When totaling tree/shrub acres, all upland acres with woody cover should be counted whether planted or naturally occurring.*

## Requesting a New Tree/Shrub Planting

To request a new Tree/Shrub Planting, a Conservation Plan Amendment is needed. To initiate a Conservation Plan Amendment request, the SWCD must complete the following and submit to the RIM inbox ([bwsr.rim@state.mn.us](mailto:bwsr.rim@state.mn.us)).

1. Amended Conservation Plan Workbook
  - a. Check “Yes” in the *Conservation Plan Amendment* section at the top of the signature page and include a summary of the requested changes in the text box provided.
  - b. Update the Conservation Plan Worksheet of the Workbook, adding the appropriate Practice and adjusting Practice Area Size(s) as needed. The *Total Maximum Practice Funds Available* should be adjusted to show \$0.
  - c. Review the *Woody Cover Management* section of the Operation and Maintenance Plan with the landowner.
  - d. The Conservation Plan Workbook must be signed by the landowner and the SWCD. BWSR will review and if approved, will sign and provide the approved Workbook to the SWCD.
2. Amended Conservation Plan Map
3. A map detailing that the location of proposed tree/shrub planting meets the Technical Requirements listed above.
4. A map detailing the between row and in-row spacing with species listed.

If the Conservation Plan Amendment is denied, an explanation will be provided with recommendations for revisions, if applicable.

**Contact BWSR Easement Program staff ([bwsr.rim@state.mn.us](mailto:bwsr.rim@state.mn.us)) for additional information.**