

Windbreaks Come to Life at Mountain Home Air Force Base
Loren St. John, Plant Materials Center Team Leader
(208)397-4133

The Aberdeen, Idaho Plant Materials Center, operated by the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, has completed approximately 53,000 linear feet of windbreak installation during a four-year period at the Mountain Home Air Force Base located in southwestern Idaho.

The Plant Materials Center and the Air Force joined forces in 1990 when a test site was established at the Base to test the adaptability of trees and shrubs to southwest Idaho. Based upon the cooperative work and the technical expertise from the Plant Materials Center, the Air Force requested assistance with the planning and installation of windbreaks at the Base. The Base is located in a desolate, 8 to 10 inch annual precipitation zone and is subject to high winds, hot summers and cool winters. There are no native tree stands for miles.

A cooperative agreement was developed between the Air Force and the Plant Materials Center in 1995 to install the windbreaks over a four-year period beginning in 1996. The Plant Materials Center developed alternative planting plans and the Air Force chose to install 5 and 6 row windbreaks consisting of Siberian peashrub, Rocky Mountain Juniper, Robust poplar, Austrian pine, chokecherry and skunkbush sumac. The Air Force prepared the sites and the Plant Materials Center planted the trees and installed weed barrier fabric to help conserve moisture and control weeds. A drip irrigation system was also installed.

According to Loren St. John, Project Leader at the Plant Materials Center, many of the deciduous trees and shrubs grew 18 to 24 inches during their first growing season. The evergreens grow slower but will provide year-round protection from the wind once they are established. In about five years the windbreaks will be providing good protection from the wind and will make living and working conditions on the Base a more pleasant experience.

The Air Force is extremely happy with the survival and growth of the windbreaks and plans are underway to continue installing windbreaks at the Base during next four years.

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Submitted to "Inside Agroforestry Newsletter, August, 1999