

Weed barrier fabric maintenance for conservation tree plantings

by Loren St. John

Aberdeen Plant Materials Center

Landowners who have planted windbreaks and installed weed barrier fabric to control weeds and conserve soil moisture should be aware of an important maintenance issue. The fabric should be inspected at least annually to determine if it must be cut away from the growing trunk of the trees and shrubs.

When the windbreak was first planted and fabric installed, the slit for the tree to grow through was minimal in size in order to help prevent weed growth right around the tree. As the tree grows both in height and in trunk diameter, oftentimes the fabric right around the trunk does not give as the tree grows. When this situation occurs, the trunk of the tree will begin to grow around the fabric and actually encase the fabric that is pushing against the tree. The

tree will only allow this to occur for a short time and once the cells that allow flow of nutrients and water within the tree are choked off (or girdled), the tree dies.

The best way to deal with this maintenance issue is to inspect each tree or shrub in your windbreak to check if the fabric is beginning to rub against the trunk. If it is, get a utility knife with sharp blades and cut

the fabric back away from the tree trunk. Slitting in an "x" pattern away from the trunk on each side of the tree will allow the fabric to give as the tree grows in diameter. This will involve a lot of getting up and down and crawling, so you might want to schedule this maintenance issue for cooler days unless your trees and shrubs are severely girdled. For deciduous trees, it might be easier to do this task in the late fall or winter when leaves are gone from the tree.

Weed barrier fabric is fantastic for controlling weeds, helping to conserve soil moisture, and increasing tree and shrub growth, but maintenance of the fabric is critical to the long term survival and performance of your windbreak.

If you have questions, please call the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center at 397-4133.

Lakeview reunion will be packed with food, fun

The Lakeview LDS Ward reunion will be held on Saturday, Aug. 13, at the Ward picnic shelter at 5:30 p.m. There will be a family rodeo, food, fun and friends.

All former ward members and their families are invited to attend.



Maintaining windbreak is essential for its survival

Windbreaks serve many useful purposes, including shade and beauty. They are not maintenance free, however. They require some annual maintenance. This windbreak at the Aberdeen Plant

Materials Center on Vanderford Road is a great example of the beauties of the windbreak. See the above article by Loren St. John to learn what needs to be done annually to the windbreaks.