

Managing Reclaimed Coal Mine Land: TREE PLANTING

Looks can be deceiving

A reclaimed strip mine will blend into the landscape and look virtually the same as undisturbed Iowa land. Don't be fooled. Just underneath the surface, the soil remains extremely fragile and susceptible to erosion. If the land is not properly managed, acid-forming materials may resurface and soils may begin to erode.

Planting trees

Landowners may be interested in planting trees to slow runoff and hold soil in place, to add in the diversity to the landscape, or to attract wildlife such as songbirds, turkey, or deer.

Every tree planting project involves several steps which must be completed with knowledge and care to ensure success. The steps include: selection of suitable tree species that can do well on reclaimed land, site preparation, proper planting of seedlings, and post-planting care and assessment. These steps are more critical on reclaimed mine lands where the landscape is fragile and the soils are not as fertile as undisturbed land.

If not experienced in establishing trees on fragile lands, assistance is available from a forestry professional. Experienced foresters are knowledgeable about the appropriate tree species and care needed to successfully plant on reclaimed lands.

Landowners frequently enter into a 4-year contract (tree planting + 3 years of maintenance) with a forestry professional to ensure the proper site preparation, tree species selection and post-planting maintenance is completed.

The most common reason for a failed tree planting is insufficient control of weeds and grass that outcompete young seedlings for moisture.



Where to get help

For assistance with tree planting or other management plans for your reclaimed area, contact your local USDA Service Center.

Resources

Each county in Iowa has a **USDA Service Center** where the local **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and **Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)** offices are housed.

These offices have technical and financial assistance available for land management and conservation practices.

Davis SWCD

402 Karr Ave
Bloomfield
(641) 664-2616

Mahaska SWCD

2503 Todd Street
Oskaloosa
(641) 673-3476

Marion SWCD

1445 Lake Drive
Knoxville
(641) 842-3168

Monroe SWCD

1701 S B Street
Albia
(641) 932-7134

Van Buren SWCD

1016 Franklin Street
Keosauqua
(319) 293-3371

Wapello SWCD

2938 Oak Meadow Dr
Ottumwa
(641) 684-6515

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For more information, contact Pathfinders RC&D (641) 472 - 6177 • info@PathfindersRCD.org