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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WINDBREAKS

In a bulletin published some years ago by the U. S. Forest Service C. G. Bates points out that the term "windbreak" may be applied to any object that serves as an obstacle to surface winds, but in practice it usually refers to collections of trees planted for this purpose. These are planted in rows, or in belts, or sometimes in extensive groves. A so-called "shelter-belt" generally consists of three rows or more, but its width is less than twice the ultimate height of the trees.

"In European countries," says Mr. Bates, "the windbreak perhaps serves its greatest utility as a check upon drifting sands along the coast; especially in France. In the interior steppes of Russia, which correspond to our middle western plains, windbreaks have been planted more or less extensively to protect fields from the desiccating winds of the region. In Schleswig-Holstein earth walls are thrown up and shrubbery is planted upon them, since forest trees cannot be made to grow there. Though windbreaks are of very real benefit to the farmer and fruit-grower everywhere, it is on the treeless, wind-swept plains that they find their greatest utility. In many cases it would be almost impossible to raise crops without protection from the hot, dry winds of summer and the cold, dry winds of winter."

Prof. R. De C. Ward, in a recent article, describes the many rows of trees planted in the Rhone valley of France as a protection from the furious northerly wind known as the "mistral."

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