

SHELTERING THE SEEDBED

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The sheltering of seedbeds can prove to be a costly, labor consuming item.

The accepted practice here in the Prairie Provinces is to box the beds in with a framework of screens 10' long and 1' high made of a 2 x 2 framework and screen wire. These are placed end to end around the beds, and are supported by nailing or wiring to flat stakes driven into the ground. This framework supports the lath shelter (snow fencing) that is then unrolled over the bed. Setting the screens, up and then removing them is very costly in time, labor and materials and the screens themselves are costly, for they must be made of treated wood or else be kept well painted to preserve them from rot. A much more simple method, and one which is practiced in England, is described below.

Cut round stakes about 2'6" long and of a 3" minimum top and point them. Starting at one end of the bed lay them out in pairs (one each side) 15' apart. Drive them down into the ground, trying to maintain the same height above the bed surface for the sake of the 'finish' of the job. About 6' beyond the ends of the bed drive in a retaining stake at an angle of 45 degrees to act as an anchor for the galvanized wire which is stretched along the top of the stakes. This retaining stake should be sunk to within 1" of its top. (The use of a proper stake-maul instead of a sledge hammer will reduce the splitting of the stakes during driving.)

Fix the wire to the first retaining stake and lead it over the tops of the stakes in the line, fastening it loosely with staples on each stake top. Strain and fasten at the other end of the bed. Go along the line of the stakes, hammering the staples home. The aim should be to fasten each 15' section so that there is no 'creep'.

Having reached the point where you have a line of stakes on each side of the bed with a taut strand of galvanized wire stretched along them, place crosspieces of 1" x 1 1/2" x 4' wooden strips across the bed between each pair of stakes and nail to stake top. Now, draw a third strand of galvanized wire down the middle of these cross-pieces. You now have three strands of wire on which to roll and unroll the lath shelters.

The advantages of this method are cheapness, a better circulation of air in the seedbeds, and a saving of time in covering the bed. The disadvantages are that in the event of a sand storm, beds may get silted up (this can be avoided by putting a row of snow fence at intervals of about ten beds), and it does not look as neat as the boxed-in bed.