

Farm Tours: Field Borders

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As Peoples Company Land Managers complete mid-summer farm tours, they are visiting farms to assess crop vigor, monitor projects/repairs, and observe general curb appeal. Notes from these tours are communicated with the operator and landowner and plans are made for tasks to be completed as needed through the end of the year.

Land Managers are also taking note of conservation practices at work or where there is opportunity for adoption. Recently, I observed several field borders in central Iowa that effectively incorporated herbaceous and evergreen trees as field borders. The two photos above show a row of small fruit-bearing trees and the photo below shows a row of evergreen cedar trees with healthy strip of brome grass.



A dense strip of vegetation along a field border has several benefits to the working landscape.

How field borders work:

- The perennial vegetation slows down water as it moves across the landscape. Once slowed, the water can filter through the ground with roots grabbing nutrients before water moves into the watershed.
- The ground cover reduces soil erosion as surface water leaves the field.
- Permanent vegetation clearly defines a field border, ensuring there is not farming operation creep over time.

Benefits of field borders:

- The watershed is protected from excess nutrients that can wash from farm fields in heavy rain events.
- The perennial and evergreen material provide important cover for insects, birds and wildlife.
- There is an aesthetic aspect of planned field borders, improving curb appeal and adding value to your farm.
- A field border may help with snow drifting.

When installing a field border, it is critical to choose hardy, site-specific plant material. There should also be careful consideration for farm equipment size and how the field border affects farmability of the neighboring field(s). Weed management is also critical in the establishment years.

For ongoing maintenance, mowing grass before/after nesting seasons helps ensure thick growth. Field borders should be monitored annually for edge-of-field small rills/water channels that might develop with restoration completed when sediment accumulates.

Peoples Company Land Managers are well versed on the many conservation practices implemented on the working landscape, as well as the various landowner cost-share opportunities available through local FSA/NRCS offices. To learn more about Peoples Company Land Management services, please visit www.peoplescompany.com or email landmanagement@peoplescompany.com.