

POPLAR AND WILLOW SHORT ROTATION INTENSIVE CULTURE (SRIC) CROPS IN WESTERN CANADA

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An overview will be presented of poplar and willow short-rotation intensive-culture (SRIC) crops in western Canada. Western Canada consists of the Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) and British Columbia. These crops are grown or have potential in four distinctive crop zones, each with its particular challenges. South-central Manitoba is in a similar crop zone as Minnesota and southern Ontario; southeastern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and the northeast Peace region of British Columbia are in a distinct crop zone, typified by the transition between prairie grasslands and the boreal forest region. In British Columbia one crop zone parallels the Coast Mountain range on the Westside; the second zone is wedged between the Coast Mountain range in the west and the Rocky Mountains in the east.

Although poplars have been planted for a long time in the Prairie Provinces in farm shelterbelts, the concept of SRIC hybrid poplar crops is relatively new. SRIC willow crops are very new to the region and are all experimental in nature. This presentation will discuss the challenges and potential of these crop systems in this region. In coastal British Columbia the culture of poplars has a long and successful history; however, the region has been subjected to various ups and downs in SRIC hybrid poplar crop systems that had more to do with corporate directions than with the crop itself. To date there has been little activity with SRIC willow crops in British Columbia.

KEY WORDS: hybrid poplar, *Populus*, willow, *Salix*

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*** INVITED SPEAKER ***