



# Okanese Poplar

Laboratory tests and prairie-wide field trials have proven Okanese to be the hardiest hybrid poplar ever developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada-Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) through its Agroforestry Division's Research Unit located at the Shelterbelt Centre, Indian Head, Saskatchewan.

Okanese originated from a 1979 cross of the Centre's Walker poplar (female) with a Russian poplar (male). The new seedlings produced were then rigorously tested through the AAFC-PFRA Agroforestry Division's Tree Improvement Program to determine how they would perform and adapt on the prairies. Okanese was selected in 1986 with testing continuing under the name of WP-69V until it was officially named Okanese and released in 2007

Evaluation of a new hybrid can take anywhere from 10-25 years to complete. The number of years is based on the length of time it takes to grow a tree to maturity, and the need to evaluate a tree through all its stages of growth and at various locations on the prairies. The evaluations cover the ability of a plant to withstand the harsh prairie climate, resist common woody insects and diseases, and survive and flourish in a variety of prairie soils.

Data collected on Okanese showed it to be one of the hardiest hybrids yet developed through the tree improvement program. In addition, it always performed in the top ten percent of the clones under study. This consistently high performance along with the positive test results, made it the natural choice for the next poplar hybrid release through the PFRA's Tree Improvement Program.

Okanese will be made available to rural landowners in 2008 as part of a mix of hardy hybrid poplars containing up to seven different poplar clones. The mixture represents a new approach the PFRA is taking in its Prairie Shelterbelt Program—helping introduce genetic diversity into poplar plantings by offering a mix of clones to eligible applicants rather than single clone packages. The change will help prevent pest infestations or climate change from wiping out or seriously damaging poplar tree plantings, as could happen when only one clone is used (monoculture). The general public or anyone wishing to obtain only Okanese hybrid poplars will be able to purchase them through commercial nurseries in 2008.

## Okanese Characteristics

- Tolerates a wide variation in climatic conditions common to the prairies that cause most poplars to suffer.
- Tolerates extreme climate change events such as cold and drought
- Resistance to insects and diseases
- Expected to have a lifespan of 60 years under average growing conditions
- Male clone, therefore does not produce seed fluff
- Does not sucker
- Roots easily from cuttings
- Combines fast growth (up to 10 meters in 10 years) with hardiness

