

2009 May 27

Alamosa Trees

Tree identification workshop and public tree inventory

Ever wonder if Alamosa has any trees other than Siberian Elms, Cottonwoods, or Crabapples? Ever wonder how to identify a tree species? Your chance is coming Tuesday evening, June 9, at 6 pm. The Alamosa Tree Board is featuring Dean Swift, of Dean Swift Seed Company and Alamosa Tree Board, who will conduct a free, hands-on “Walking Tree Identification Tour” in downtown Alamosa. Walking snacks will be provided as we know this is the dinner hour.

Please meet at the NW corner of Edison and Main; in the case of bad weather, meet at the Green Spot, 711 State. For further information or to let us know you’re coming (not necessary, but will help us plan materials and food quantities), please contact me at [Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net](mailto:Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net), call 719.589.3295 or visit [www.AlamosaTrees.net](http://www.AlamosaTrees.net). The Tree Identification Workshop is open to anyone interested and is a preliminary to the Tree Board’s Public Tree Orientation and Inventory. You may participate in the Tree Identification Workshop without any obligation to help with the Tree Orientation and Inventory.

The vision of the Alamosa Tree Board is to “to have a beautiful, healthy, and well-managed community forest with maximum tree coverage and diversity of species. Citizen input and support will ensure a sustainable forest that is seen as a valuable community asset.” Alamosa has been a Tree City for 19 years. A key recommendation of the Arbor Day Foundation, promoter of Tree City USA, is to keep a current public Tree Inventory. A tree inventory is a powerful management tool because it provides an overview of the ages, types, and condition of trees and it aids in setting priorities for maintenance and planning.

So what are public trees? For the purpose of the tree inventory public trees include park trees and street trees. Park trees are those in public parks, public parking lots, and the cemetery. Street trees are those between the sidewalk and the curb or in pits along sidewalks.

The Tree Board has created a database based on a paper copy of a tree inventory conducted in 1995. The goal of the current inventory is to have an ongoing document useful to our City. The location (using global positioning system coordinates) and diameter of most public trees have already been entered. Volunteers in teams of two will inspect each tree to verify size and list tree species and overall condition.

Many of us are aware that majority of trees in Cole Park and the older sections of town are old and nearing the end of their life cycle. Having a tree inventory will show us what we have now and help us determine what we need to do in the future.

I know many citizens care about our trees as witnessed by the outcry when several downtown trees were removed last year during Main street’s makeover. Unfortunately, several more will be replaced this summer after the current construction is completed. Take a look at some of the ash trees. Much of the canopy is dead. Street trees have a hard life. The ones in downtown Alamosa are in tiny pits (smaller and fewer in number now), have little access to water and air (remember the majority of tree roots are in the top 18 inches of soil), breath car emissions, and receive unhealthy doses of salt in the winter if we have snow.

Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation plans to replace downtown trees with varieties that can survive in these conditions.

A note of caution regarding tree removal and care services. The City of Alamosa doesn't require certification of tree service workers. Anyone can grab a power saw and a truck and set themselves up in business. Before hiring a tree service, it would be a good idea to ask for references and find out about their tree care experience. Removing old, large trees is not easy matter or we'd probably be doing it.

“A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.” Elton Trueblood