

2010 04 21 Alamosa Trees
by Marilyn Loser

One year! Gardening season starts.

One year of Alamosa Trees: this is the 27th installment of this every-other-week column. When I approached Ruth Heide I wasn't sure how much I'd find to say about trees in Alamosa. I thought I might need to branch out and write about a second passion, Alamosa Flowers.

Turns out there's still more to say about trees in our wonderful city. If you have any column ideas please let me know by emailing Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net.

If you're getting as excited about gardening season as I am and would like some information regarding gardening in our unique climate, please wander the paths of www.AlamosaFlowers.net. There are more than 225 flower and shrubs listed as well as suggestions for a "Hardy Garden" that provides color throughout the season. All photos are of our Alamosa garden.

Next week, Alamosa celebrates Arbor Week. We are still seeking donations for shade trees to be planted in four of our parks: Diamond, Friends, Zapata, and Jardin Hermosa. Please call me at 719-589-3295 or visit www.AlamosaTrees.net for more information.

Make sure to mark your calendar for the Levee Meeting, April 26, 6 p.m. at the Alamosa Recreation Center. The city included an information sheet with April utility bills. Two previous columns in this series (February 10 and 24) discussed levee issues. The city sheet gave a brief history of the levee and a list of facts.

Four facts grabbed my attention:

1. "Hundreds of trees in Alamosa will need to be removed to remain a certified levee. In some areas of the levee, this will mean a 60-foot wide path without any vegetation."
2. "Many of the easements [through private land] are not wide enough and additional land or easements will be required."
3. "Without a certified levee, FEMA may remap the flood plain which could require homeowners to once again purchase flood insurance."
4. "The Army Corps recently released for public comment rules governing variances to the new vegetation rules. This option will not be available until the end of the summer."

PLEASE! attend this meeting.

Meanwhile, back in my garden. Lots of short, colorful bulbs are blooming – red tulips, white and orange jonquils, yellow daffodils, tiny yellow and purple iris, golden crocuses and star-shaped blue chionodoxa. I tend to plant short bulbs since strong spring winds shred taller blooms. Creeping phlox is starting to display its first lavender flowers,

Icelandic poppies are putting on buds, and golden banner is spiraling up out of the bare Earth.

The first flowers spur me on to take a look at the entire garden, including trees. I make sure the water basins surrounding trees can still hold water and have 3-4 inches of mulch. Winter winds have a way of redistributing shredded bark. I remove any grass or early weeds that pop up around trees not planted in the lawn. Grass is much easier to spot this early and scraping away young kochia and elm seedlings is a lot easier than attacking it later.

I remove any tree wrap that protected trunks from deer and winter sunburn. Foresters suggest trees are more susceptible to bark insects and diseases if tree wrap remains on during the growing season. Further, some trees, especially young ones, photosynthesize through their bark.

I check for damaged or broken limbs. Some deer wreaked havoc on part of the garden this winter, knocking over an arbor trellis and almost decimating a fern bush. They didn't seem to have browsed the shrub, but many branches were broken. As those of you who follow this column know, I'm not a fan of the overpopulation of deer in town.

I trim branches near the trunk, avoiding damage to heartwood. I also avoid trimming too far from the junction. As Phil Hoefer, Colorado Forester, says: pruning too far out is as damaging as too close. The tree tissue further away from the branch junction is less able to cover the wound with new layers of wood. Sadly, I see many trees in town that were pruned incorrectly. They have stubs sticking out on which I could hang a hat.

This past winter wasn't very hard on my trees. And the wonderful late winter and spring moisture was a real benefit. I don't need to replace any trees this year. If you're thinking of planting a new tree, the next column will help since it will deal with transporting and planting trees. According to State Forester, Keith Woods (yes, that really is his name!), people often overlook the importance of carefully transporting and storing trees prior to planting.

"There is always music amongst the trees in the garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it." Minnie Aumonier