

2010 Sept 15 Alamosa Trees
by Marilyn Loser

Fall is ideal for tree planting

Hearing this surprises people who think of planting trees only in the spring or summer. There are several reasons for fall planting.

Fall weather is cooler, allowing plants to establish roots before winter sets in. The cool weather is also nice for the gardener!

Summer heat stimulates top growth more than root growth. Roots are essential to tree health and longevity. Since we don't see the roots, we often overlook this fact.

However, be careful to give the roots time to absorb water and air before the ground freezes. Soil temperatures of 40 degrees or higher are best. Trees, especially newly planted ones, need to be watered frequently during the fall.

In the fall, trees are beginning to enter their dormant state so they recover more quickly from being moved around. Unlike other, warmer areas of the country, the trees that do well here are all good candidates for fall planting.

While some suggest planting only after leaf drop, I always want to see a new tree before leaf drop to insure there was a healthy canopy during the past summer! If you're buying from a nursery, you could perhaps have the tree set aside while it still has plenty of leaf display and plant it only after the leaves drop.

Proper tree planting is at least as important as timing. I still talk with people who believe trees should be planted in deep narrow holes amended with rich potting soil which will help them develop deep roots. Once again, trees do NOT grow this way. Ninety per cent of the roots are in the top two feet of soil, so trees need to be planted with the flange of the top roots at ground level.

Unless the soil is just dirt, amending the hole with rich soil hampers root growth over time. The roots will congregate in the rich soil and not establish themselves in the surrounding, wider diameter of soil as needed. For more information on planting refer to previous columns at AlamosaTrees.net.

Citizens, members of the Alamosa Tree Board and employees of the Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation just completed planting 24 trees funded by a Colorado Tree Coalition Grant and the Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation. My heartfelt thanks to all who helped.

We ended up planting the trees during the second week of September due to a mishap with the tree order. However, this may bode well for the trees as they can now focus on developing their roots.

Now, I can't help but smile as I walk around the Cole Park loop with its new trees. Take a walk and check it out while most of the trees still have great leaves! The Hackberries, usually a very hardy tree, seemed to be in shock. We'll have to see how they do in the spring – each tree will be labeled so we can follow their development. I'm hoping the newly planted trees are busy below ground putting on roots.

Want to enjoy the early October air and help the planet? The Bureau of Land Management is looking for volunteers to transplant Chokecherry trees around Kerber Creek, a few miles west of Villa Grove at the north end of the valley on October 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

I registered online and would be happy to take a car full of volunteers (Call me at 719.589.3295 or email mmloser@adams.edu). Rob Santoro, Volunteer Coordinator for the BLM and Rio Grande National Forest, says the plan is to meet at the Villa Grove Trading Post at 8:30 a.m. and then caravan approximately 9 miles to the worksite.

Find more information and register online at volunteeroutdoors.net/index.cfm?fuseaction=Opportunities.View&Opportunity_ID=3030 (I know this link is devilishly long – you can also access it from the AlamosaTrees.net site by clicking through the News Columns tab and selecting this column). I'd love to see you on October 2nd!

*“I have reached illusion's end in this grove of falling leaves.
Each leaf a signal of past joy, drifting here within my heart.”* Mu Dan