



## *Alamosa Trees* *by Marilyn Loser*

### Arbor Week & Tips from Pruning Workshop

2011 April 27

Alamosa will celebrate Arbor Week, May 1 to May 7. The Tree Board and Department of Parks will plant 16 trees in seven City Parks and we would appreciate your help. Monday 11 am will find us at Diamond Park planting a Shade-Master Honeylocust and a Narrowleaf Cottonwood. Tuesday at 3:30 pm we'll plant a Hackberry and Lanceleaf Cottonwood in Jardin Hermosa.

Four trees are slated for planting in the northern end of Cole Park on Wednesday at 11 am: 1 each Hackberry, Shade-Master Honeylocust, Lanceleaf Cottonwood, and Narrowleaf Cottonwood.

We also have trees for Zapata, Boyd, Olympian, and Friends Parks. The full schedule will be posted in the Valley Courier and online at [AlamosaTrees.net](http://AlamosaTrees.net). The city crew will deliver the trees, dig the holes, and provide mulch. We'll plant the trees according to Colorado Tree Coalition standards and there will be handouts describing the trees.

Those of you who follow this column may recall the plan to beautify Sixth Street during Arbor Week. The project has grown and will include a winding sidewalk on the south side of Sixth between State and Ross Streets. Since it makes sense to install the sidewalk before planting the trees, the grant-funded planting has been postponed.

Pruning Workshop Tips: Vince Urbina, Colorado Forester, presented an informative, interactive, and enjoyable workshop last week. There's already a waiting list for a possible pruning workshop next spring – maybe in Monte Vista. In this column I'll highlight my favorite tips for pruning shade trees.

1. Prune safely. Urbina pruned from the ground during this workshop and limits himself to using his trusty 10-ft ladder at home in Grand Junction. For larger trees, he says to hire a professional.
2. Right now is a good time for structural pruning. Before trees leaf out, you can better see the tree's structure. It's also fine to prune in the summer after trees are in full leaf.
3. Except for pruning deadwood or broken branches, prune young trees only after they are established. A foot or so of new growth indicates a tree is established.
4. Branches within 8 ft of the ground are temporary. These branches help the tree get off to a good start but are typically pruned as the tree matures. Many cities have ordinances requiring trees to be trimmed 8 ft over sidewalks and 13 ½ feet over streets. Sadly, Alamosa still has no such ordinance. I believe such an ordinance is prudent for safety. Let me know what you think! [marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net](mailto:marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net).
5. Establish a leader. Most shade trees do best with a single leader (crab apples and most locusts are exceptions). It's a good idea to purchase a tree with a straight trunk whose top is higher than other branches. If your tree has co-dominate leaders, choose the most vigorous and remove the other.

6. NEVER remove more than 25% of the tree canopy in one year. Removing more will undermine the trees vigor. As one participant said, “Once you get going, you want to cut more and more!” Urbina piles up trimmed branches near the tree so he can keep a critical eye on how much has been trimmed.
7. Use good quality pruning tools. Urbina uses by-pass pruners and a saw. By-pass pruners work like scissors, with 2 cutting edges. He has had only two pair in his whole career – and he gave away the first pair. He keeps the blades sharpened using diamond-embedded stones, which fit easily into a pocket. Anvil pruners are not recommended because they have one cutting edge and smash the branch against the opposing, non-cutting, side.

He uses a pruning saw – one of those that folds up. He also had a “silky saw” that doesn’t fold, but it amazed people who tried it out. It made cutting a branch almost seem like cutting through butter.

8. Remove water sprouts. Water sprouts are the weak branches that grow perpendicular to the ground. They often result from topping or over-pruning a tree. In an urban landscape, water sprouts usually mean more work since they should come off. Urbina trims water sprouts in the summer.
9. Pruning is tree maintenance. Set up a 5-10 year maintenance cycle. Often people wait until a tree is very large before pruning. This is generally harder on the tree and is more costly to the owner. To significantly reduce a tree’s middle-age problems and expense, select good healthy tree stock and properly maintain trees in their early years.

Future columns will discuss more pruning information. Meanwhile check out the following websites. Planting & Care tab at [www.AlamosaTrees.net](http://www.AlamosaTrees.net), [www.TreesAreGood.com/treecare](http://www.TreesAreGood.com/treecare), [www.ext.colostate.edu](http://www.ext.colostate.edu), and [www.coloradotrees.org](http://www.coloradotrees.org).

“*More Trees, Please!*” Slogan on International Society of Arboriculture t-shirt.