



## *Alamosa Trees* *by Marilyn Loser*

### Take a Look at the Trees Around Town

2011 June 22

Have you seen the beautiful locust tree that is blooming at First Street and Alamosa by the yard-recycling bins? It's a New Mexico Locust (*robinia neomexicana*) that has huge light pink blossoms. It's a favorite of tree expert Dean Swift. He said, "I love this tree (it's also a legume and fixes nitrogen) but it does have the problem of sending out rhizomes and turning into a thicket."

There's another smaller specimen along Washington Avenue just south of Tremont. Another with brighter pink, but smaller flowers, is in the parking lot behind Vance Law Firm on 4<sup>th</sup> Street near Ross. It should be cold hardy enough for Alamosa. We may be close to the upper bound for elevation; I've seen sources report they grow "up to 7,500 feet" and Alamosa is 7,544 feet. Be careful of the short thorns! The New Mexico Locust is native to New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

When I think of flowering trees in Alamosa, I usually think of Robinson and Hopa Crabapples that bloom earlier, in profusion. Both these trees do well here. The Robinson is virtually pest free and has darker blossoms and is slower growing than the Hopa. "Spring Snow" Crabapple is becoming increasingly popular since it doesn't bear fruit. Its blossoms are bright white. There aren't any fruitless, red-flowering crabs.

Another promising white-flowering tree is the Oak-leafed Ash (*sorbus thuringiacea*). Two of the three planted a couple of years ago on the eastern side of Boyd Park are looking good. They are just dropping their blossoms.

In fact, most of our park trees are looking pretty good. If you've never seen a Kentucky Coffee Tree, take a look at the two on the west side of Cole Park that were planted last fall.

Of the 24 trees planted in Cole Park last fall, thanks to the Alamosa Department of Parks, funds from a Colorado Tree Coalition grant, and the help of many volunteers, 21 are doing well. The other three may not have made it through our amazingly dry, windy winter. I'll give them another week just in case they're late coming out. All the new Cole Park trees have name plaques so you can tell them apart.

The 16 trees planted in Alamosa Parks during Arbor Week (and before leaf out) are all looking very good. The cardboard around their trunks will be removed when the city adds bark mulch and protective wire fencing.

The city crew transplanted five trees from the now demolished city building to the Alamosa Ranch picnic area east of the golf course last fall. The two large spruce trees have excellent new growth and seem to be

doing well. Two of the three deciduous trees made it through. The city will continue watering them over the summer. I don't think they'll make it without the additional water because the ground near them doesn't get irrigated and we haven't had any precipitation to speak of since last August.

The transplanted aspens west of the intersection of Hwy 160 and Hwy 285 are all leafing out. They're on an automatic drip system, have generous water basins and should develop into a fine copse.

It has been a weird spring for trees and shrubs. My hackberry tree is just beginning to leaf out – I thought it might have died. It's north of a wood fence and the late May cold weather may have delayed its leafing out. The hackberry across the street from my house in Jardin Hermosa (east end) came out late but it is doing well as are the ones in Cole Park and Friends Park.

I wasn't around the last half of May, but many people reported their lilacs didn't do well. I have several varieties that bloom at different times. Two bloomed before I left and one is blooming now. It appears blooms on some of the others froze.

Make sure your trees receive enough water during this drought. In early summer I usually have moist soil about a foot down, but not this year. If your trees aren't in a watered lawn, you need to water them. Remember, 90 percent of the roots are in the top two feet and extend out at least as far as the canopy.

If you're planning to plant some trees this year (Please! Please!) or you are just curious, check out the tree index at [AlamosaTrees.net](http://AlamosaTrees.net).

*“People in suburbia see trees differently than foresters do. They cherish every one. It is useless to speak of the probability that a certain tree will die when the tree is in someone's backyard .... You are talking about a personal asset, a friend, a monument, not about board feet of lumber.”* Roger Swain