



Front Range Tree List Offers Tips for Alamosa Planters: Part 1 by Marilyn Loser

2011 August 3

Alamosa's environment is more challenging than that of Colorado's Front Range. However, we can learn a lot from the informative "Front Range Tree Recommendation List (FRTRL)"*. It rates trees from "A" to "D" and includes information on water needs, soil, availability and cold hardiness. Only trees that have been observed for 10 years and show excellent hardiness and health are included on the "A" list. "B" list trees have a problem or two and "C" list trees haven't been observed long enough to rise to the "A" or "B" list. The "D" list contains trees known to be problematic.

Sharron Harris, Executive Director of the Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association, chose a group of Colorado State University horticulturists, landscape architects, municipal foresters and nursery and greenhouse owners to develop the list.

The group's goal was to encourage anyone who plants trees toward a more diverse and resilient plant palette. It considered tree health, not looks.

Just as in food crops, a tree monoculture "lends itself to pests and disease more easily," said Harris. "Colorado is not the easiest place to have a garden or a landscape or grow anything. The tree that gets planted and dies in a year — that's not good for anyone."

I talked with local nursery/greenhouse women Ruthie Brown (Green Spot Garden Center) and Stephanie Coley (North River Greenhouse and Landscaping) to find out about their tree recommendations and inventories.

Maples (acer) are an upcoming favorite here, but not all species flourish. On the FRTRL "A" list is the Tatarian Maple which is available from the Green Spot this year and will be available from the North River Greenhouse next year. There are two specimens of this small tree on Main Street in downtown Alamosa — one in the 700 block by St. Ives and another in the 500 block by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The Alamosa Parks and Recreation and Tree Board planted Autumn Blaze and Celebration Maples in Cole Park during fall 2010 -- the trees are labeled. The Autumn Blaze are doing well, the Celebration less so.

Many people have mentioned to me that our very windy and cool early spring weather followed by very warm weather produced weird tree responses. As I mentioned in an earlier column, my Hackberry and the one in Jardin Hermosa Park looked dead when I expected them to leaf out. Stephanie mentioned that their Black Locust trees also leafed out and blossomed late. Perhaps this is a benefit as they might be less prone to early bud freezing with our unpredictable spring weather.

I encourage you to visit our local retailers and plant a tree! We need more. This article will be continued in the August 17 column.

Street Tree Inventory: About 600 trees were preliminarily inventoried in Alamosa west and south of the Rio Grande, north of Main, and east of Adams State College. The Tree Board is looking for volunteers to walk the sidewalks of their neighborhoods to complete the survey during August using provided forms and guidance. Interested? Please call me at 719.589.3295 or email Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net. We'd love your help!

*Find the list on the web at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/treereclist.pdf>. For the Alamosa Tree list go to AlamosaTrees.net and click on the Tree Lists tab.

“Will urban sprawl spread so far that most people lose all touch with nature? Will the day come when the only bird a typical American child ever sees is a canary in a pet shop window? When the only wild animal he knows is a rat - glimpsed on a night drive through some city slum? When the only tree he touches is the cleverly fabricated plastic evergreen that shades his gifts on Christmas morning?” Frank N. Ikard, North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Houston, March 1968