



## *57 New Trees for Alamosa*

*by Marilyn Loser*

2012 March 14

The Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation and the Alamosa Tree Board, along with the help of volunteers like you, will plant 57 new trees this spring and summer.

Recently the “Alamosa Cemetery Shade Tree Planting Project” was funded by the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC) for the amount of \$1,500. The city will kick in another \$2,000 to fund 14 trees with name plaques and protective wire mesh. The Tree Board and Department of Parks submitted the grant. The trees will be planted this summer.

It may surprise you to hear we’re planting trees in the cemetery as we often focus on park trees. However, many Alamosans frequent the cemetery – people love to take walks in the area or just enjoy the peace and quiet in addition to visiting the graves of loved ones.

Located just south of downtown Alamosa, the cemetery provides spectacular views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the East and of the San Luis Valley to the West. The older portion of the cemetery has evergreen and deciduous trees gracing the gravel avenues and shaded benches that welcome the visitor.

The City of Alamosa invested in expanding the cemetery in recent years. The city crew leveled ground, installed irrigation equipment, erected fencing, and planted lawn. However, there are few trees and the area appears very raw.

Our goal is to plant new trees that will provide future generations experiences that we now enjoy in the older part of the cemetery. The trees will be planted along the narrow avenues and will be labeled as are some newer trees in Cole Park. Wire fencing will protect them in early years from deer, lawn mowers, and other accidents.

A species-diverse variety of trees was selected from the Alamosa Tree Board approved list. The tree palette includes Lanceleaf Cottonwood, ‘Autumn Purple’ Ash, ‘New Horizon’ Elm, and ‘Cimarron’ Ash trees.

The “Beautify Bleak (6<sup>th</sup>) Street” project will continue with more tree-plantings this spring. The sidewalk on the south side of 6<sup>th</sup> between Ross and State was completed last fall and we’ll plant

18 trees during Arbor Week, April 28 to May 4. The trees were funded through a \$5,000 non-matching Xcel Foundation grant (through the CTC) received last year.

Sidewalk construction was more complex than you might think, so the trees didn't get planted last year. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, Colorado Department of Transportation and the City of Alamosa were all involved.

The tree palette includes 'Autumn Blaze' Maple, 'New Horizon' Elm, 'Shade Master' Honey Locust, 'Canada Red' Chokecherry, 'Autumn Purple' Ash, and Hackberry.

The Alamosa City Council approved and will fund yet another planting project along 6<sup>th</sup> Street this summer. 23 trees and 37 shrubs will be planted by the city crew on the north side of 6<sup>th</sup> south of Sonic. Blue Spruce, 'Spring Snow' Crabapple, 'Prairie Fire' Crabapple (a new variety to me), and 'Red Twig' Dogwood (shrub) are slated with two types of rock ground cover.

Aspen trees, donated by Loretta Mitson, were planted last spring on the south side of 6<sup>th</sup> west of the intersection with Hwy. 285 and seem to be doing well. The aspens are on a drip system and the city crew installed wire mesh fencing to keep the deer at bay last fall. A few of the trees were nibbled before the fencing was in place – we'll see how they fare this summer.

6<sup>th</sup> Street is one of our most frequently traveled roads in Alamosa – its looks will only improve in the upcoming years!

Arbor Week 2012: Alamosa will celebrate Arbor Week from April 28 to May 4. Most of the rest of the state will celebrate Arbor Day on April 20 (the third Friday of the month). As long-time residents of the San Luis Valley know, April weather can be problematic. Waiting a bit longer tends to be easier on the trees and planting volunteers.

The schedule hasn't been finalized. We'll call on you to volunteer – mark your calendar! Projects include planting trees along 6<sup>th</sup> Street (as described above) and restoring water basins and/or bark mulch around Alamosa park trees.

We're also hoping for local workshops on tree selection, planting, and maintenance. As a warm-up to Arbor Week, Vince Urbina, Colorado State Forester from Grand Junction, will speak Monday evening, April 23, on the topic of Tree Care During Droughts. Details to follow.

Stay tuned, I'll post the schedule as soon as possible!

*"Trees can transform a street more easily than any other physical improvement. Moreover, for many people, trees are the most important single characteristic of a good street."* Alan B. Jacobs in Great Trees