



Wildlife Habitat and Favorite Trees

by Marilyn Loser

Alamosa Trees
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Whoosh! A flock of weaver finches descends on the bird bath in our garden. A red-winged black bird squawks in disgust at me as I enter the vegetable garden. I think it's been eating sunflower seeds.

I greet a robin who hops, dances, and flies around the yard. It doesn't seem to very afraid of me but keeps its distance. I wonder if it's the one that nested in my Austrian pine – right at eye level -- a couple of years ago. We were able to watch the family develop during that summer.

A collared dove pecks at the ground with its long beak. I imagine it's looking for worms. I see more and more of these birds around Alamosa. According to Wikipedia, they were introduced into the Bahamas in the 1970s and spread to Florida by 1982. Native to Asia and Europe, they've become invasive in the United States. However, I still like watching them. They love to perch in our pine tree and rather than flying away as I wander around, they stand perfectly still. I think they believe I can't see them.

I enjoy providing habitat for birds and other (desirable) critters in our yard. While no birds nested in our yard this year, quite a few spend a lot of time here. It's like a bird day camp.

Fortunately, none of the birds has dropped a currant or gooseberry bomb on me but I see dark blue specks on walkways and garden furniture. I consider my bird-dyed furniture to be yard art.

I would not be enjoying the antics of birds in my yard if we didn't have trees.

Given what a few trees in a yard can do, I was dismayed when someone in town proudly mentioned that he'd chopped down one of his trees and was planning to remove others. I didn't get the idea that the trees were old or diseased. Why? Save water? Save it for what? Golf courses and toilets?

Flush less, water a tree, and provide animal habitat! And perhaps, in the bargain, provide shade for your yard and home. We've had a particularly hot summer and according to many scientists, this may become the norm. More, rather than fewer, trees would make Alamosa an even more enjoyable place to live.

I'm not happy about all wildlife in Alamosa. Those of you who have followed this column know that I'm not in favor of the introduced squirrels that are furthering the demise of the trees in Cole Park on the NW side. I'm also not in favor of the over-population of deer in Alamosa.

If this topic interests you, attend the community forum on wildlife issues in Alamosa (particularly deer) this Thursday, Aug 30th, 6 pm, at the Alamosa Family Recreation Center. The forum will be hosted by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the City of Alamosa staff.

Favorite trees: I have several in my yard. The Austrian Pine we planted 14 years ago is my favorite. Besides providing bird sanctuary, it is a beautiful green all year around. This is especially appreciated on dreary March days. I also love the sound of the breeze in the needles.

I also enjoy our two Canada Chokecherry trees. They have beautiful white blossoms in the spring and the early light green leaves turn to purple by mid-summer. Birds eat the fruit so there's no mess.

My favorite tree in town is the Ponderosa Pine at the corner of Main and Poncha. It survived the destruction of the middle school and construction of the new Safeway and row of retail stores. I still rescue pine cones from the onslaught of auto tires and use them in winter wreathes.

Do you have a favorite tree in Alamosa? Let me know! Email me at Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net
“There is something grand about trees. Their age and stature lend our surroundings a quiet nobility. The presence of these lofty beings enhances our lives and provides visual relief from the square walls of our dwellings and the containment of our workplaces.” Gary Moll & Stanley Young in ‘Growing Greener Cities’