



Checking Out the Trees in My Yard

by Marilyn Loser

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Our trees are looking quite good this year. Walking around my yard on a cool, sunny morning earlier this week I noted that the blossoms on my Canada Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana* 'Shubert') trees rival the lilacs for their fragrance, that the Narrowleaf Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) is very majestic and is busy pushing up shoots all around the yard, that the Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) is leafing out all the way to the tips of each branch, and that the two maples (*Acer* species) I planted last summer fully leafed out during the past week and don't have any dead branches.

I attribute the overall good health to a relatively mild winter and almost double our average moisture for the first five months of the year (3.95 actual inches compared to the average 2.22 inches according to wunderground.com).

My Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) is not looking as brown as it often does this time of the year and has one to three inches of new growth on various branches. All the Austrian Pines, even the one I thought might die last year, have good new growth. The Mugo Pines (*Pinus mugo*) that I thought would stay short now tower above me. This is encouraging as pines only put on new growth once a year, unlike deciduous trees that continue to develop new leaves throughout the summer.

I have specimens of two tree species that I really want to do well in my yard as they are considered drought tolerant, cold hardy, high altitude, and able to do well in a variety of soil types. These sounded great for our environment! My Common Hackberry is always the last tree in the yard to leaf out and it's just now showing green. Last year the top one foot of the highest branches died off. This year there is no die off and I'm very happy! The one across the street in Jardin Hermosa isn't looking as healthy. It has about three inches of dead twig at the end of top branches and a couple of lower ones appear completely dead. This tree had a hard time the year the city stopped watering parks for a length of time due to water system problems. As a young tree with a limited root system, it didn't fare well.

Sadly, my Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) has about three inches of dead twig at the end of most branches. I love the lobed oak leaves and yellow fall color, but it is not thriving. I understand it is slow growing, but didn't expect so much die back. Several sources say that it is one of the most successful oaks for Colorado and is long lived. I keep telling that to the tree. Has anyone had success with this tree? Please let me know: Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net.

We're seeing more Maple species do well around town so I planted an Autumn Blaze (*Acer x freemanii*) and Tatarian (*Acer tataricum* 'Hot Wings') last year and am looking forward to watching them develop over the summer.

The Crabapple (*Malus 'Hopa' and 'Robinson'*) and Ash trees continue to do well. By the way, all but one of the Crabapples we planted during Arbor Week 2014 on the south side of Sunset Park is doing very well. They should have identifying plaques sometime this summer. I still feel these are one of the best trees for Alamosa.

My Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) trees are doing well, but I continue to monitor the Emerald Ash Borer webpage at Colorado.gov. As of May this year it's still only found in the Boulder area in Colorado, but I strongly suggest NOT planting an ash tree. I have four and when (note: I didn't write if) the EAB arrives here, I will have to decide if I'll incur the expense of repeatedly treating them over the years to come. According to the EmeraldAshBorer.info website, it has killed "tens of millions of ash trees" since its discovery in 2002.

Two 'tree' species I have that are more shrub like with multiple branches coming up from the bottom are Gambel Oak (*Quercus gambelii*), a Colorado native, and Amur Maple (*Acer ginnala*). I love them both. One of the maples I plan to trim to a single stem; the other I'm happy to have as a busy wind break.

With the exception of the Narrowleaf Cottonwood, our trees need low to medium water. The cottonwood does well as it's in a garden area that receives regular water. We end up pulling it suckers up to 30 feet away from the trunk. In my next life, I'll plant a Lanceleaf Cottonwood.

"Trees were so rare in that country, and they had to make such a hard fight to grow, that we used to feel anxious about them, and visit them as if they were persons." Willa Cather, My Antonia