



2015 Sept 9

Fall Is Starting - Trees & Shrubs Are Responding

by Marilyn Loser

Riding my bike around Alamosa during recent mornings I can feel that fall is coming on. I also see this seasonal response in trees and shrubs. While I love the temperature and feel of the air, I know deciduous trees and shrubs will soon be dropping their leaves. Always makes me a bit sad!

Many trees, such as cottonwoods and Siberian elms in Alamosa, are still very green unless they had attacks from aphids. If they have, the leaves are browning and shriveling – and the street pavement underneath their canopy is dark with aphid excrement (I don't have a better term even after consulting my online thesaurus!). I tend to close my mouth and hold my breath as I ride under the trees overhanging the street.

I love seeing the red apples on crab apple trees. My trees produce small apples and they aren't very tasty. Some folks have crab apple trees that produce larger, tastier fruit. I'm happy with the two species I have (*Malus 'Robinson'* and *'Hopa'*) as they have been pest and drought resistant for many years. I would love to hear from other folk who have trees with larger, tastier fruit as to how pest and drought resistant their trees are. Please email me at Marilyn@AlamosaTrees.net.

Through a Colorado Tree Coalition grant we planted 18 crab apple trees south of Sunset Park in the spring of 2014 during Arbor Week. They are still too young to produce fruit – we'll have to watch them during the next few years. Soon plaques will be installed so we can identify each tree species.

I'm noticing trees that seem to have less water are starting to have a lot of yellow leaves. Unhealthy trees tend to turn fall colors earlier and drop their leaves earlier. I have 4 ash trees (I will not plant more: please see the column at Alamosa Trees: <http://www.alamosatrees.net/news-c/2014-03-05-alamosa-trees-web.htm>). Two ash trees that get more water are still very green; the two that get less are starting to yellow. I'm not saying this is bad, but it is an indicator in my yard of overall health and amount of water received.

As I reported in a column last summer, I planted an Autumn Blaze Maple (*Acer x freemanii 'Autumn Blaze'*) and a Tatarian Maple (*Acer tataricum garann 'Hot Wings'*) in 2014. Both are doing well. The Autumn Blaze is starting to turn red around the edges (there is a lovely specimen in Zapata Park).

At first glance, the Tatarian seemed to have leaves turning very red. Upon closer inspection, I saw that many leaves were already gone and the red color came from the many seed pods. I was alarmed – I didn't want the trees' energy going into seed production! I searched on the web and discovered that Tatarian maples tend to drop their leaves early and produce a lot of red-colored seed pods. I am hoping this is the normal case! There is a very nice Tatarian maple on the east end of Main Street on the north side in downtown Alamosa. See if you can spot it!

We haven't seen exotic birds in our yard, but we've been seeing a lot of birds recently. The other day, I surprised some birds in the currant shrub near the front gate. I'm not sure who shrieked first – me or the birds. I told them I was sorry. Many birds are also dining on the gooseberries left on the shrub. I did harvest a gallon or so of gooseberries and left the remainder to the birds. We also had a red-shafted flicker wandering around. In a 15-minute or so period, I counted 20 birds in the yard. Wonderful! Many were pecking at the ground – don't know if for seeds or bugs. I will have to research this more over the winter.

If I wanted to plant a new tree or shrub in Alamosa, I think I would wait until spring. A few years ago we planted trees in Cole Park (we didn't receive them until the fall). They are doing OK. However, newly planted trees need to adjust and create broader root systems. It is hard to do while starting the hibernation process. Alamosa shuts down sooner than most places in the state with our low temperatures and wide temperature swings.

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.” William Blake