



## Alamosa to Host Community Forestry

by Marilyn Loser

2016 August 24

“Adding Value to Communities” is the title of the September 9 Western Colorado Community Forestry conference to be held at Adams State University. According to the brochure, “The 2016 conference will focus on tree values, funding needs and costs associated with community forestry programs. In addition to community tree finances, we will also look at urban trees from the perspective of the arborist, landscaper, and city department responsible for trees.”

I’ve been attending these conferences for several years and am happy that I can walk to this one! They are always inspiring and full of well-presented information. I’m looking forward to learning more about how trees can enhance businesses and shopping experiences from Paul Bryan Jones, a certified International Society of Arboriculture arborist, from Taos, New Mexico. Other topics address the value of trees, budgeting for tree care programs, pruning costs, and tree planting impacts on landscaping projects.

All of this and lunch for \$25. For more information and to register, go to the Colorado Tree Coalition website at [coloradotrees.org](http://coloradotrees.org) and click on the Events tab.

So what is community forestry? There is more than one definition. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, “Community forestry was initially defined as any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity.” A review of its forty years of community-based forestry estimates, “almost one-third of the world’s forest area is under some form of community-based management.”

This surprised me until I read on and realized globally community forestry goes beyond what I consider Alamosa’s community forest. The FAO concern seems to be maintaining sustainable forests and allow local regions to determine how best to use their forests for such activities as growing trees at the farm level to provide cash crops and processing of forest products by artisans and small industry to generate income.

My focus on community forestry revolves around Alamosa. We don’t farm trees here. It’s hard enough just to grow just a few! I consider our community forest to be all the trees and shrubs in the Alamosa area – both public and private. Something Alamosa has in common with other areas in the world is the need for the community to participate. Participation could mean planting and caring for a single tree, helping plant trees during Arbor Week, being careful to avoid damaging trees, sponsoring a park tree or bench, or enjoying and appreciating the trees in our parks.

Over the last seven years, the Alamosa Tree board, in conjunction with the Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation, has focused on planting a broader palette of tree species appropriate to our environment.

Given recent droughts and concerns of rising water costs, we've added trees that require less water than towering cottonwoods and willows that do well in wetter, bosque areas.

I'm also concerned about having an attractive and healthy city. Folks are more attracted to downtown areas that are nicely landscaped – and trees are a key feature. Hot streets, noisy traffic, and the harsh lines of buildings unrelieved by the softness and coolness of green trees is not inviting.

It seems many residential areas that have removed old trees aren't replacing them and many new homes have only one tree if any at all. We'd like to think Alamosa is the land of cool sunshine. But it doesn't seem so in July and August! Eighteen of the record-high July temperatures happened since 2000 and three of them occurred this summer. Fourteen of the record high August temperatures are since 2000. Trees provide shade and tend to make areas cooler. According to various papers I've read, people are more likely to spend more time outdoors if the surroundings are pleasant – trees certainly help with that!

Plus trees add to property value. Ian Hanou of Plan-it Geo will speak at the upcoming conference on “What's my tree worth – using tree data collection to educate and promote the value of trees to the community.” I'm also interested in the slated talks “Trees mean business,” “Building a budget,” and “Cost of trees and landscaping.”

I'd love to see you at the conference!

*“It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.”* Robert Louis Stevenson