



Arbor Week Is Coming; Maintenance Is the Focus

by Marilyn Loser

2017 February 8

We have a more challenging environment that many communities – you can't just plant a tree and expect it to thrive, or even to live! While we have many wonderful trees in town, years of drought and increased water rates have taken a toll on our Community Forest. Therefore, the Alamosa Tree Board (TB) will focus its efforts on tree maintenance this year.

I am happy to report that once again, the Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation (P&R) and the TB received a Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC) Grant. Hurray! This marks the eighth year in a row that Alamosa has received a CTC grant.

While not huge, these grants help extend the city tree fund. The grant will provide \$2,000 for maintenance equipment, brochure printing, and a mulch sign for the local recycling center. P&R is providing \$6,490 for 22 trees to more than match the equal funding requirement of the grant. While it may seem odd to include planting new trees in a maintenance focused grant, it really isn't! Properly planting the right tree in the right spot in the right way and carefully maintaining it in its first years is essential to life-long tree health.

Proper watering is crucial to a tree's short- and long-term health, especially in an arid environment such as Alamosa's. At planting, a one- to two-inch diameter tree needs 5-10 gallons of water. Until it is three years old, it requires 10-15 gallons weekly. And the water needs to soak in, not puddle and possibly drown the roots. The grant will provide for 35 tree gaiters that will help young street and park trees receive the required amount of water in an appropriate manner. These plastic gaiters fit around the trunk of young trees and hold 15- to 20- gallons of water. The water slowly drips out over the period of a week or so.

About that brochure -- we are designing a planting and maintenance brochure specifically aimed at our local environment. While we will have some printed copies, the brochure will also be available for viewing and download at the AlamosaTrees.net website.

During Arbor Week 2017, slated for April 22 (Earth Day) – April 28, the TB and P&R plan to hold several events including at least one maintenance workshop and several tree plantings. Please mark your calendars! We would love your participation and help.

As Arbor Week nears, I'll let you know about various events. We're hoping to work with other organizations in Alamosa to promote Earth Day and Arbor Week. Through the process you can learn the

proper way to plant, protect, and maintain trees. We follow CTC and the International Society of Arboriculture standards.

I encourage home owners to buy 1” to 1.25” diameter trees (the City buys 2” diameter trees). They cost less, are easier to handle, and usually catch up to the larger diameter trees within 5 years as they tend to adapt to the new environment more quickly. Also, most gardeners don’t have a front-end loader like the city uses to move trees with large root balls!

If you are willing to start with 1- to 2- year-old seedlings in quantity (25-50 seedlings per species) or individual 3-year-old trees, you can purchase them through the Colorado State Forest Service. Order forms are due by April 7 and tree pick-up day is Friday, April 21. For more information, visit the Alamosa District website: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/districts/alamosa-district/> and click on ‘Seedling Trees’ in the right side column.

Tree species that will be planted this year by the P&R this include: Tatarian Maple (*Acer tataricum* – small deciduous), Sensation Boxelder Maple (*Acer negundo* – medium deciduous), Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis* – large deciduous), Skyline Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* – medium deciduous), Spring Snow Crabapple (*Malus* -- small deciduous), Narrowleaf Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia* – large deciduous), and Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens* – large evergreen). For images and more information regarding these species, visit AlamosaTrees.net, and look under the Tree Index tab. There is no advertising on this site.

“If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed. If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree. If you are thinking one hundred years ahead, educate the people.” Chinese Poet, 500 BC