Tree Plantings, Pruning, and Species Worldwide

by Marilyn Loser

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Arbor Week and Earth Day are coming up. Celebrate Earth Day by helping to plant trees and shrubs at the Rio Grande Farm Park (RGFP). There will be a breakfast at 9 a.m. followed by planting and kids' activities at 10 a.m. You will also have a chance to learn about proper tree/shrub planting and maintenance.

The RGFP folks have ordered saplings from the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). They'll be planting 80 One-seed Juniper (*Juniperus monosperma)* and Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis*) tree seedlings as well as more than 100 Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana)*, Nanking Cherry (*Prunus tomentosa)*, and Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) shrubs. For all of the RGFP spring events, visit the website at riograndefarmpark.org or visit them on Facebook.

We're firming up the times and locations for tree plantings hosted by the Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation (ADP&R) and the Alamosa Tree Board. The tentative plan is to plant Colorado Spruce in the Alamosa Cemetery one day over the noon hour, a couple of trees in Jardin Hermosa during a morning, and several trees in Cole Park during an afternoon after school. Times and locations will be posted at AlamosaTrees.net and in the Courier.

The newly reformed Town of Del Norte Tree Board sponsored an excellent tree pruning workshop last week featuring Vince Urbina, community forester with the CSFS Urban and Community Forestry Program. ADP&R personnel and several other Alamosans attended. After a morning classroom meeting, the group roamed the street of Del Norte and pruned trees. Of course, the tree owners granted approval ahead of time!

It was great to hear the various opinions and to have a hands-on opportunity to put theory to work. As a reminder, it is still a great time to prune trees in Alamosa. If you need tips, take a look at past columns posted at AlamosaTrees.net. You can also learn what to look for if you are planning to purchase a new tree. As Urbina stressed, you can avoid a lot of unnecessary pruning by buying a good tree in the first place!

Folks who have lived in the San Luis Valley for some time know that we're more restricted in the number of tree species that do well here compared to many other parts of Colorado and the country. In fact, four types of trees (Siberian Elm, Blue Spruce, Cottonwood, and Crabapple) account for 2/3 of the street and park trees in Alamosa. The next top six species are Green Ash, Aspen, Cherry, Russian Olive, and Willow.

So how do you suppose Alamosa's tree palette compares to the number of tree species that exist worldwide? I had no idea until I read about the two-year research project conducted by the Botanic Gardens Conservation International, the organization that represents the world's botanic gardens. Their answer: 60,065 species exist! Since I had no idea, I don't think I was surprised.

However, I was surprised by a paper published in the "Journal of Sustainable Forestry" that states more than half of all tree species only occur in a single country, and many rare species are under threat of extinction. You can see the full report at http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wjsf20/current. Brazil has the most tree species, with 8,715 species, followed by Colombia with 5,776.

Apart from the Arctic and the Antarctic (which have no trees), the region with the fewest tree species is the Nearctic region of North America, with fewer than 1,400 species. I had never heard the term 'Nearctic'. According to Wikipedia, the Nearactic region covers most of North America, including Greenland, Central Florida, and the highlands of Mexico. The parts of North America that are not in the Nearactic realm are Eastern Mexico, Southern Florida, Central America, and the Caribbean islands which are part of the Neotropical real, together with South America. A future column will discuss the importance of the research.

"And the wind said, 'May you be as strong as the Oak, yet flexible as the Birch. May you stand tall as the Redwood, live gracefully as the Willow, and may you always bear fruit all your days on this Earth.'"
Unknown