



Alamosa Arbor Week & Early Blooms

by Marilyn Loser

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There's still time to help plant trees during Alamosa Arbor Week! Noon Wednesday we'll be planting Colorado Spruce trees at the Alamosa Cemetery, and Thursday, 10 am, we'll be planting trees in Jardin Hermosa. The Alamosa Department of Parks and Recreation (ADPR) crew does the heavy lifting. The rest of us help backfill and place protective wire cages around the trees.

You can also learn about tree maintenance, including the use of tree gators -- slow release watering bags for taking care of young trees. The city has purchased two types. Trees and maintenance equipment are funded by a Colorado Tree Coalition grant and the City of Alamosa Parks resources.

We'll also have free copies of the new Alamosa Tree Board maintenance and planting brochure -- pick up your copy!

Arbor Week started last Saturday, Earth Day. Lots of volunteers, young and old, turned out to plant about 200 trees and shrub saplings at the Rio Grande Farm Park. After the saplings were planted, they were thoroughly watered from a truck and weed barrier (fabric circles with a diameter of about 2 ½ ft.) was placed around each tree and covered with weed-free soil. As I left a bit after noon, remaining folks were starting to place protective barriers around each tree to protect them from roaming wildlife.

Monday afternoon, about 18 enthusiastic PALS kids (aged five to nine) helped plant a Tatarian Maple (*Acer tataricum* garann "Hot Wings") and a Skyline Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis* "Skyline") in the southwest corner of Cole Park. They wheedled shovels large and small and did a great job despite the high winds and dropping temperatures. The Alamosa Tree Board and ADPR thanks PALS for the help. Each child received a lilac sapling from the Colorado State Forest service to take home. District Forester Adam Moore explained how to plant and care for the lilacs. Visit the '2017 Arbor Week' tab under the 'Around Town' menu item at AlamosaTrees.org for photos.

Other volunteers and Tree Board members helped plant a Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) just inside the paved path on the east side of the park. All trees will have protective wire cages around them for the next few years for protection.

Crabapple trees downtown are blooming wonderfully this week. Yes, the beautiful red, pink, and white blooms are earlier than usual this year. I have often wished the flowering trees would be in full bloom during Adams State's graduation -- usually the end of the first week of May or during the second week. And, I'm frequently saddened that they typically bloom right after the graduates and family members have gone! This year the bloom is about two weeks early -- I don't recall such an early bloom in the 35 years I've lived in Alamosa.

One friend mentioned that their Transparent Apple tree (*Malus 'Yellow Transparent'*) is starting to bloom. Naturally, they're worried that a hard freeze could ruin any fruit production this year. Average lows and highs for the last week in April are 27-29 degrees F and 62-64 degrees F according to the Wunderground web site.

Blooming shrubs such as Forsythia (*Forsythia*, bright yellow flowers), Russian Almond (*Prunus tenella*, single pink flower) and Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*, tiny white flowers) also bloomed early and are just about done. Native Golden Currants are showing off their small yellow blooms around town and my double flowering Almond, often called Tea Rose of China (*Prunus triloba plena*, double pink blooms) is starting to flower.

Since their bloom time can vary so much, I consider these trees and shrubs to be 'day-neutral' plants. That is, temperature and perhaps moisture determine bloom time more than the duration of darkness. Examples of short-day plants include Chrysanthemum and Poinsettia; they need day lengths of less than 12 hours. According to the Arizona cooperative Extension website, long-day plants, those needing day lengths of more than 12 hours, include almost all of the summer-flowering plants, as well as many vegetables including beet, radish, lettuce, spinach, and potato.

"Just think of the trees: they let the birds perch and fly, with no intention to call them when they come and no longing for their return when they fly away. If people's hearts can be like the trees, they will not be off the Way." Langya