



Alamosa Landscapes

Pruning Time Is Now; Planting Time Is Coming Soon

by Marilyn Loser

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Happy first day of spring!

It's a great time of the year to evaluate the trees and shrubs in your yard and take care of any needed pruning. There are two pruning events coming up.

The Rio Grande Farm Park (RGFP) will hold its March workday, this Saturday from 10am to 1pm. "This month's work day will be tree pruning at the Farm Park," according to a RGFP email. "Adam Moore of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) will be leading the work day to show proper tree maintenance and how to get them ready for the growing season." Attendees are encouraged to bring their own hand pruning equipment if they can to ensure that all attendees can participate in the pruning. I hope to be there and will bring my equipment as well as some of the Tree Board's. For further information contact Amanda Falkner at Amanda.rfgp@gmail.com.

The CSFS is offering a tree pruning workshop on Tuesday, April 2 from 9-3 in San Luis at the Costilla County Conservancy District office. According to the CSFS, "The primary focus of the workshop will be the pruning of young trees as well as fruit trees from the ground or with the use of a ladder," report the CSFS. The cost of the workshop is \$20, which includes lunch. Call the CSFS at 587-0915 to make a reservation. Reserve your space soon as the class size is limited to 20 people. I've attended a number of workshops presented by Vince Urbina from the CSFS Urban and Community Forestry program and can attest that they are full of useful information and practical, hands-on demonstrations/practice.

Alamosa Arbor Week will be May 11 to May 17 this year. We will have 3 planting opportunities and encourage Alamosans to volunteer. On Saturday, May 11 at 10 am we'll be planting wind break trees at the Alamosa Recreation Center. Two sessions will involve planting evergreens along the entrance to the Alamosa Cemetery – Tuesday, May 14, 4:30 and Wednesday, May 15, noon. Please come help!

I had the good fortune to attend the "Trees and Tree Care for Southwest Colorado" conference in Durango last week. Vince talked about "Targets and Trees". The principles he described apply to your yard. You need to assess risk. For example, do any of your trees have dangling or dead branches? If so, what would be the target if they fell? First, think about people as targets.

Do you have a picnic table or path underneath a tree? Are there any cracked branches leaning over your sidewalk or driveway? What about compromised limbs hanging over playground areas? Kids don't look up, it turns out. Adults have to monitor playground areas for possible risk.

Next, consider property targets. Would any dead or hanging branches land on your house or a car if they fell? How far would they fall? Typically, the farther a branch falls, the more damage it does.

An example case. There's a large Siberian elm in a neighborhood yard that hasn't been watered or tended in many years. It has quite a few dead branches as well as some dangling branches that are just resting on other branches. There are also several branches with cracks. During the recent strong winds several branches swayed alarmingly. The tree is near a side door that is rarely used but its branches extend out to the street. I make it a point to avoid walking under the tree and I certainly would not park a vehicle under that tree. If it were my tree, I would have someone remove all the dead and dangling branches and have them assess the cracked branches.

If this same tree were out in the woods where no body walked and there weren't any structures under it, it wouldn't be a risk. It is only a risk if it could harm people or property.

Problems that are caught early tend to be easier and less costly to mitigate. I'm not trying to alarm folks or encourage them to not plant trees. Trees provide us with so much. They help cool us in the summer while providing beauty. They can screen us from wind and noise. They can provide a visual screen if desired and they help clean the air.

"I feel a great regard for trees; they represent age and beauty and the miracles of life and growth." Louise Dickinson Rich