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Down the Shady Lane

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NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE

Down the Shady Lane

a newsletter for Nebraska's community forests

June 2007

Thoughts and Jots of the Editor

What is in a name? I have been asked many times if I chose forestry for a profession because of my name (Chip), or if I changed my name because I am in forestry. To be honest it just happens to be dumb luck that a person named Chip ended up in forestry. Actually, for those of you who don't know, my given name is John, but my father nicknamed me Chip. He gave my sisters nicknames too. My oldest sister, Julyn, has the nickname Pug, and my other sister, Nicki, is nicknamed Gus.

But names for trees are usually for a reason. The scientific names given to trees help explain what family a tree belongs to and the specific characteristic that makes it different from others in the family. Genus name *Quarcus* tells us the tree is an oak, and the species name *rubra*, meaning red, means it is a red oak. But just like people, trees are given nicknames, some which make sense, and some that are just confusing.

Growing up in Iowa, the common name I learned for *Tilia americana* was basswood, but most people I talk to in Nebraska call it linden. Sometimes the traits of a tree look different to people. I had a discussion once with a homeowner who kept telling me about her white maple. I had never heard of, let alone seen, a white maple, so I asked if she would show it to me. She proceeded to take me to her backyard where she pointed to a silver maple and said, "This big tree with the leaves that are white on the bottom."

The new thing now with names is to find some outrageous name to give your child. Movie star Gweneth Paltro named her daughter Apple. I know a couple who named their child Mars because he will be in a rock band some day (they say). So after some discussion with Mary Shimming of North Platte, I thought it would be fun to see how creative people from the Tree Planter state can be. Using tree names, common or scientific, what name would you give your child? Give it some thought, then email your names to me at **jmurrow2@unl.edu** and put in the subject line "Tree-named children." I will put results in the next newsletter, so you can see how creative your fellow newsletter readers can be.

It is a good thing my son Robbie was born before I thought about this, otherwise his name may have been Douglas Acer Murrow.

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University of Nebraska Lincoln

Greening Nebraska's Communities

by Re Tree Nebraska Committee

One decade, 1 million trees – that is the goal of ReTree Nebraska.

The 10-year cooperative initiative will raise public awareness of the value of trees, reverse the decline of Nebraska's community tree resource and improve the diversity and sustainability of trees in communities across the state for generations to come.

J. Sterling Morton said, "Each generation takes the earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed." However, assessments of more than 200 community tree inventories conducted by the Nebraska Forest Service since 1977 show the state has lost nearly half its community forest resources since the late 1970s. Now is the time to reverse this. The goal of planting 1 million trees in the state's cities and towns over 10 years is ambitious, but we are confident Nebraskans will rise to the challenge and make it happen one town, one tree, one shovel at a time.

Another goal of ReTree Nebraska is increasing species diversity in Nebraska's community forests, a common measure of community forest health and sustainability. This is a lesson that was learned the hard way with Dutch elm disease, pine wilt and, soon, emerald ash borer. With good species diversity, not all of your eggs are in one basket, so to speak, and no single insect or disease can destroy your entire forest resource. A general rule of thumb is that no single species make up more than 10 percent of your community forest resource.

Because Nebraska's community forests are faced with numerous threats, including severe weather, drought and both current and emerging pests, such as pine wilt and emerald ash borer, public education will be a key component of the ReTree Nebraska initiative as well. Planting the trees only gets us halfway there–we need to make sure the trees grow and thrive for future generations. To help accomplish this, we are developing educational materials and working closely with the Nebraska Arborists Association and Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association so Nebraskans will have access to accurate, up-to-date tree planting and care information, as well as both high-quality nursery stock and well-trained, certified arborists.

Everyone across the state is encouraged to let us know about their tree planting efforts. We want to make sure each tree planted counts toward the goal of 1 million trees. We also welcome your comments and suggestions about how to make ReTree Nebraska a success.

For more information or to contact the ReTree Nebraska team, visit www.retreenebraska.unl.edu or e-mail retreenebraska@unl.edu.

ReTree Nebraska is led by the Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, University of Nebraska Rural Initiative, UNL Extension, UNL's Department of Agronomy and Horticulture and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UNL.

Wondering about your community's forest resource? Your community can have an inventory done to show what your resources are, help direct your community in management planning budgeting. To do an inventory, the community needs to contact either the community forestry department or their local district forester. We ask that the community provide some volunteers as drivers and data recorders. These volunteers are usually tree board members. If your community does not have a tree board, this would be a great opportunity to gather people in the community who are concerned about your community's tree resources. The Nebraska Forest Service can help set up a tree board in your community.

Arbor Day Celebrated by Students Planting Trees

by Rachel Allison, Southwest District Forester

Across the state, several students were recognized for their artwork in Nebraska's Arbor Day Poster Contest. The theme, "Trees Are Terrific . . . and forests are too!", encouraged students to learn about trees and forests, and the important part they play in our state, the nation and around the world.

This year Dutton Hughes, a Grand Island fifth grader, is the state winner. Five runners up were also recognized in the Nebraska contest. They are: Lauren Klaasmeyer of Burr, at Nemaha Valley School in Cook; Ethan Lesiak of Fullerton Public School in Fullerton; Jack Searl of St. Wenceslaus School/Debie Plog Art Studio in Omaha; Mick Stoltenberg of Thomas Elementary School in Gretna; and Sara Troupe of Trinity Lutheran School in Fremont.

The winning schools celebrated by planting trees with their classmates, teacher, family members and others. The Nebraska Forest Service participated as district foresters helped in selecting the right tree and in finding the right location (trees do GROW!). Foresters shared with students about the history of Arbor Day, how important trees are to Nebraskans, and often the need for extra care to help trees survive.

The Nebraska Power Association (http://www.nepower.org), representing the utility companies of Nebraska, sponsors this contest each year by providing the savings bonds to the winner and runners up.

Hughes' poster was chosen from among more than 700 participants, representing nearly 35 schools from across Nebraska. As the Nebraska state winner, he received a $100 US Savings Bond, a winner's certificate from the National Arbor Day Foundation, and other prizes. Dutton is a student at Knickrehm Elementary School.

The five runners up received a $50 savings bond, a certificate from the National Arbor Day Foundation and all six of the teachers received $250 for the purchase of a tree and/or new educational materials.

As the state winner, Hughes and his family celebrated during Nebraska's Arbor Day event at the State Capitol with Attorney General Jon Bruning. Dr. Scott Josiah, Nebraska's state forester, presented Dutton with a framed copy of his poster.

All of the posters can be seen on the Nebraska Forest Service website at http://www.nfs.unl.edu/CommunityForestry/postercontest.asp

Jack Searl of St. Wenceslaus School helping plant a blue spruce on the school grounds.

And One Last Thing...

by Chip Murrow, Community Forester Assistant

I know there is an old saying about beating a dead horse with a stick, but this is one topic I feel very strongly about and want to get on my soapbox about one last time. Kids need nature, period. Two newsletters ago, I wrote about kids not being in touch with nature. Shortly after I wrote that article, I was informed about the book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.* I recently received this book as a gift, and even though I have barely scratched the surface of it, what I have read is right along with what I and others in the "outdoor" types of occupations have seen. Children's lack of understanding how nature works, how nature is linked or even an interest in it can be disheartening. But there is hope.

Nature does not have to be a boring, sit and listen lecture. I know myself that nature can be its own teacher, you just have to get the children to it. It does not have to be for long periods of time. My daughter Brooke was on a school field trip at the Nature Center that was only 45 minutes, but the children looked for tadpoles and frogs in the wetlands and tore apart decaying logs to look for ants and other woodland decomposers. Robbie, my son, spent the night at scout camp where he and some of the scouts caught a leopard frog, saved a small painted turtle and searched for animal tracks along the creek bed. Most of these activities, while supervised, were initiated by the interests of the kids in the environment.

Brooke (the little girl in the visor) and some of her classmates looking for tadpoles at the Nature Center.

Robbie (the boy on the right) and two fellow scouts doing what boys do best around a creek.

Knowing there is a ten year initiative to plant 1 million trees in Nebraska communities (see page 2) means there are ten years worth of children and nature interactive potential. Children love to help out and love a challenge, so here is the opportunity to help them and your community. Even Justin and Sue have learned over the past 20 years volunteering has no age limit (see the article on page 5). So I challenge you to shut off the televisions, computers and video games and have your children become part of the million trees planted in the next ten years. Your children and your community will thank you.

A "Vine" from the Arboretum What We Have Learned

By Justin Evertson, Assistant Director for Community Programs, and Sue Kohles, Special Projects Coordinator, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

An organization can't undertake 20 years of funding community landscape grants without learning a few things along the way. Certainly the numbers provide a compelling picture—millions of dollars granted, hundreds of projects assisted, thousands of trees planted, etc. But what have we truly learned? Can we draw any conclusions to guide us as we close the book on one grant program and continue the saga through others?

What we've seen is that the real story lies in the individuals and communities who undertook these projects. They're the ones who did the work, had a vision of what their town could be and were determined to make it happen. They're the ones we celebrate as we look back over 20 years of community landscaping projects. Here are just a few of the things we've learned, through them, from the more than 800 projects implemented so far:

An explosion of volunteers can be brought into community service and empowered to make their communities more viable. Empty, ugly and abandoned downtown lots can be made into shady street-side respites. Towns like Wilber, Deshler and Hallam and schools like Norris can be devastated by tornados and yet see replanting begin—often before the clean-up is even over. A group of ladies from Comstock can call themselves the "flower floozies" and transform a fire-ravaged area of downtown into a fun and beautiful garden oasis.

A retired gentleman in Battle Creek can rally the park committee and completely transform the appearance of the park. "Parks of Pride" becomes a very accurate description of the effort. An outdoor classroom or habitat garden can be a great resource for hands-on learning in any school, whether it's elementary, secondary or college-level. A group of firemen in Lincoln, creatively using some of their down time, can use the area around the fire station to plant a demonstration garden. Two women from Scribner can take it upon themselves to restore the lost glory of a city park. Their motto: "either help us out, or get out of the way!"

The city park superintendent in Pierce can guide the transformation of the local park into one of the premiere public gardens in the entire region. A mini-park can be created in Ohiowa (population 142), a town where there are still no paved streets. People are never too old, too young or too inexperienced to successfully apply for, coordinate, plan and implement a landscape project (as was demonstrated by a ninth grader in Ogallala). Many communities are willing to create new parks even when budgets are stretched agonizingly thin. There are true community servants out there who are willing to step in and pick up the pieces of uncompleted projects whose leaders unexpectedly or tragically left.

We have learned about failure also. Many projects have had significant problems and a few simply failed when, for numerous reasons, the right mix of people and ideas just did not come together. Although we grieve the loss of even one tree planted incorrectly or a landscape planting that has become a weedy mess, we choose instead to celebrate the majority of projects, where plants were planted properly and cared for with passion.

We have learned that governmental agencies can work together, a novel idea in this day and age. Consider the working relationship between the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Nebraska Forest Service, University of Nebraska, Nebraska Department of Roads and Nebraska Environmental Trust. Since 1994 these entities have cooperated to bring grant funds, technical expertise and enthusiasm to Nebraska communities. They cut through red tape, set aside past squabbles and sought better, more efficient ways of interacting. They brought together the unique strengths of each

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organization and helped create something bigger and better for the Nebraskans they serve.

We've come to recognize some of the ingredients that lead to successful projects. Although these factors can vary from project to project, there are some that seem to be universal.

Organization: Although it seems obvious, projects must be well-organized from the start. It's quite easy to pick out the ones that were not.

Enthusiastic Leadership: The best projects always seem to have enthusiastic leaders who bring both vision and hard work to the effort. These are the people who don't take no for an answer and manage to find their way around any problems that arise. They're also the people who make sure the project is properly maintained after the fun of planting is long past.

Committee Involvement: Great projects result when lots of people are involved in the planning, planting and maintenance of a project. It is especially wise to invite the participation of people with a variety of backgrounds and skill sets—fundraisers, plant enthusiasts, educators, students, business representatives, maintenance staff, etc.

Planning Process: The urge to start planting often shortchanges the success of a project if it has not been well-conceived or -designed. Working through a planning/design process that clearly defines the goals of a project, the best plants to plant, the best design strategies and maintenance that will be required, is a must.

High-Quality Planting and Implementation: Although no one ever intends to do a poor job of planting or implementing a project, it happens. In recent years, we've seen a disturbing trend of planting trees improperly—too deep, with girdling roots, ball and burlap issues, poor mulching, etc. If the planting effort isn't good, maintenance needs can increase dramatically and the project may never reach its full potential.

Outreach to Community: Projects that are well-publicized to the local community end up with broader support and eventually become a bigger source of pride throughout the community.

Commitment to Maintenance: Unfortunately, after the fun and glory of planting are over, enthusiasm can fade and a project can quickly deteriorate. The best projects recognize maintenance needs and capacities during the planning process and put in place mechanisms to insure high-quality, long-term care.

We've learned that it isn't enough just to provide funds to create landscapes, that communities need to understand how to care for them as well. Our recognition of the importance of maintenance led to the creation of NSA/NFS/UNL Landscape Maintenance Workshops, which are offered annually. We have learned that funding, plant information, best management practices, insects, disease and environmental conditions are constantly changing, so we need to change, too. We need to continue to build on our experience, follow the latest research, work in cooperation with other agencies, seek out experts and work with communities and the nursery industry to continue to improve landscape practices.

We have come to realize that community greening does more than decrease energy costs, provide wildlife habitat, benefit the environment and strengthen real estate value and economic development. There is growing recognition that people of all ages—physically, socially, emotionally and psychologically—need contact with nature for healthful existence in an increasingly complex world. We've seen the value of our existing community forests. We're convinced that the community forests of the future will be even more important than those that have made our communities healthy and livable up until now.

Expanding Tree City Ordnances to include Certified Arborist Requirement

by Jim Keepers, President, Nebraska Arborists Association

Caring for trees is a skilled profession, not a job. You would not ask an auto salesperson to fix your plumbing or electrical problem, so why have an untrained person with a chain saw, truck and ladder to take care of your city trees?

The issue of proper and timely tree care by certified professionals is so important that the Nebraska Forest Service is currently reviewing the possibility of updating the Tree City USA certification standards to include a requirement for a certification ordinance. A certification ordinance would state that only certified arborists (Nebraska Arborist Association or International Society of Arboriculture certified arborists) shall perform tree related maintenance work within the city limits. Such an ordinance would not only be in the best long term interest of the community forest resource but would also serve to protect communities and its citizens from liability issues related to uninsured tree care workers.

The Nebraska Arborists Association (NAA) stands ready to help local communities and private trees companies train their employees to become certified arborists. Nebraska is one of only a few states in the union that has its own statewide arborist certification and training program. The NAA training program covers tree ID, pruning and climbing and formal classroom instruction covering all aspects of tree care. To assist individuals who are interested in attending these training classes, the NAA has a scholarship program that will cover the costs of these classes. See the NAA web sight – www.nearborist.org for additional information.

In addition to passing the certification exam, all NAA certified arborists must have completed and maintain first aid and CPR training, show proof of insurance (individual or company), and comply with other additional requirements that can be found in the NAA certification brochure. This brochure can be found on the NAA website. To maintain arborist certification, the association also requires certified arborists to maintain their professional education by receiving 30 NAA continuing education credits every three years.

The NAA is also looking at establishing a special association tree board membership. Look for future information on this membership that will be published in upcoming newsletters and listed on the NAA web page. If you have any additional questions, please contact the NAA Executive Director in Lincoln at (402) 476-3865 or e-mail: naa@assocoffice.net.

Changes for the Newsletter

Down the Shady Lane will be taking on a few changes after this newsletter. The first is a shift in when the newsletter is produced. In the past, the newsletter came out in January, April, July and October. Last year and this year the April newsletter has not made it out until June. The Tree City USA Celebration, Arbor Day celebrations and late March workshops have been why the April newsletter gets behind. The new schedule will be a summer, fall, winter and spring printing being June, September, December and March.

The second change is Down the Shady Lane will be going electronic. To be more environmentally friendly and reduce costs and the newsletter will be sent out to subscribers through email. This change will not happen all at once, but upcoming explainations on how to subscribe and when you can will be in the next Down the Shady Lane. By going electronic, we will also be able to link to larger stories, use more pictures and provide our readers with a resourceful newsletter.

Calendar 2007

Year-round	Educational nature programs for all ages in Lincoln at Pioneers Park Nature Center, 402.441.7895
June 2-10	Wildflower Week celebrated throughout the state, 402.472.6679
June 9	Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Plant Sale in Lincoln, 402.472.2971
September 8	Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Plant Sale in Lincoln, 402.472.2971
October 6	Wild Fruit and Nut Jam, (Keep the date open!), 402.472.9869

The leopard frog caught by the scouts.