

Friday, April 30 Arbor Day Events Look to the Future

Written by Nemaha County Herald

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Nebraskans will celebrate Arbor Day on April 30 with events across the state. Community celebrations include tree-plantings, festivals and arboretum tours.

“You don’t have to travel far to find an event at a community near you,” said Jessica Kelling, ReTree Nebraska coordinator, “but a meaningful event can be even simpler than that.”

Kelling recommends celebrating it “right in your own neighborhood or backyard by planting a tree or simply taking time to pay attention to some of the beautiful changes occurring this time of year.” Many spring-flowering trees like redbud, magnolia, serviceberry and fruit trees are in full bloom with others soon to follow.

If you have young children, Kelling recommends helping them plant a tree they can enjoy and remember for decades to come. Trees also can be planted in honor or memory of people or events you want to remember.

Trees can provide great memories but their value goes far beyond that. They also significantly reduce energy costs, beautify the landscape, attract wildlife and improve the environment. To ensure newly planted trees will thrive, Kelling offers the following tips:

- Choose a tree based on function and form first, then aesthetics. Consider the tree’s purpose in the landscape. After you determine its purpose and benefits, consider things such as color and flowers.
- Consider the tree’s mature size when choosing its location. If there isn’t room for the tree to grow and mature, the planting won’t be successful. When a planting spot is selected, spread a garden hose in a circle to help visualize the tree’s mature canopy spread. This also will help prevent planting too close to existing structures.
- Make sure the tree is not planted too deep. The planting hole should be twice as wide and as deep as the root ball. Be sure to remove excess soil from the top of the root ball to locate the tree’s primary lateral roots. These should be located at or just below the surface.
- Promote tree health with mulch. A 2 to 3 inch layer of mulch will protect tree roots from weather extremes, conserve moisture and eliminate weed and grass competition. Keep mulch from resting against the base of the trunk and don’t apply too much mulch. These can both trap excess moisture at the base of the trunk and around the roots, resulting in insect and disease problems.
- Provide supplemental water for the first year or until the tree is established. The amount of water a newly planted tree needs depends on the species planted and soil type. Water the tree at planting and again the next day. After this, use a screwdriver to test the soil. If soil moisture is adequate, it should be fairly easy to push the screwdriver into the ground 6 to 8 inches. If the ground is dry, it will be difficult to push the screwdriver in beyond a couple of inches. Automatic irrigation systems typically provide too much water for a new tree.

To report your planting, and for more information on proper planting and Arbor Day events, visit retreenebraska.unl.edu. ReTree Nebraska is a cooperative effort of the Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Inc., University of Nebraska Rural Initiative, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, Nebraska Community Forestry Council and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UNL.