

Community Forestry Assistant

Newsletter March 2009



Arbor Day is the holiday Nebraska gave to the world. The first celebration of Arbor Day took place on April 10, 1872. The idea for Arbor Day originally came from a pioneer moving to Nebraska from Detroit, Michigan. His name was J. Sterling Morton. Upon arrival in Nebraska, his heart was dispirited from the lack of trees. He and his wife were nature lovers and the home they established in Nebraska was quickly planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers. Morton was the editor of Nebraska's first newspaper. As an early proponent of forestation, he used this platform to promote "tree plantings"



in cities and towns. He organized a contest in which the prize, "a farm library of twenty five dollars worth of books to the person who, on that day, shall plant properly, in Nebraska, the greatest number of trees." Nearly one million trees were planted that first Arbor Day. The winner on the prize was one J.D. Smith, who planted an unbelievable 35,500 trees in one day. In 1885, the Nebraska state legislature named Arbor Day a legal holiday and selected April 22, Morton's birthday, as the date for its permanent observance.

Today, all states memorialize Arbor Day by legislation, official proclamation, or public acclaim, although the dates vary according to local climate. Officially, the last Friday in April is celebrated as National Arbor Day. Arbor Day has now spread beyond the United States and is observed in many countries of the world. Idaho celebrates Arbor Day on the last Friday in April, the traditionally accepted date. However many communities in Idaho choose to celebrate the holiday on different dates due to weather considerations or other factors.

Arbor Day Grant Opportunity. In observance of Arbor Day this year, the Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association, in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Lands, Avista, Rocky Mountain Power, and Idaho Power are sponsoring 40 Arbor Day grants in the

amount of \$300 for planting trees in Idaho communities. The "Planting Idaho" program is intended to help cities celebrate Arbor Day, plant appropriate trees for energy conservation, and foster a stronger relationship between Idaho communities and the Green and Utility Industries. For more information on how to participate in the 2009 Arbor Day Grant Program, contact your local Community Forestry Assistant or Ann Bates at 1-800-462-4769 (abates@inlagrow.org). Entries are due no later than March 20th.

Arbor Day Poster Contest. Idaho fifth graders are also encouraged to participate in the 2009 Arbor Day National Poster Contest, which honors winning posters at the state and national levels with cash, bonds, and other prizes. The Arbor Day poster contest is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation, the Idaho Department of Lands, and the Idaho Forest Products Commission. For more information on the poster contest contact Gerry Bates, Idaho Coordinator, at 208-522-5964. Entries are due by March 13th.

J. Sterling Morton also originated the idea of using trees as memorials. He thought trees much superior to cold marble as memorials to persons or events. He said, "How much more enduring are the animate trees of our own planting." The celebration of Arbor Day represents a priceless opportunity. Planting trees is an act of kindness and optimism. Trees purify our water and remove pollutants from our air.

Additionally, they provide beauty for both the natural and constructed landscapes¹/₄shade to cool a sun-warmed brow¹/₄wind breaks that aid energy conservation¹/₄shelter and food for wildlife¹/₄they are essential for soil conservation in a windy place. J. Sterling Morton was proud of the success of Arbor Day and noted, "Other holidays repose upon the past. Arbor Day proposes for the future."



This was written, in part, by Gerry Bates, Southern Idaho Community Forestry Assistant.