

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF ARBOR DAY ACTIVITIES?

- Plant a tree, or some trees, or a shrub.
- Supply a tree for someone else to plant.
- Find out what trees are growing near you. What do they contribute for you? For others? In the world of interdependent creatures? What can you learn about them? Where they originated? What they need to grow and thrive? What things might threaten them? How are they propagated? Who planted them?
- Learn about the prairie pioneers who introduced new trees to our area – people like Frank Skinner of Dropmore, Manitoba, Martin (Laddy) Martinovsky of Gerald. Find out about the work that has been done at University of Saskatchewan, Department of Horticulture developing plums, cherries, apples that grow well on the prairies.
- Write a story or a poem about your favorite tree. Create a piece of art that celebrates trees.
- Share what you create with some people you know (or don't know).
- Check to see if there are some trees or shrubs you can help prune or clean up around.
- Make a contribution to some group who are planting trees.
- Write a letter to your MLA or to your municipality thanking them for supporting Arbor Day and for planting or safeguarding trees.
- Make trees and the planting of trees part of your conversation with family and friends.

WHEN ARBOR DAY/ WEEK IS PAST

Talk with friends about what you did to observe Arbor Day/Week. Start thinking about next year's Arbor Day. Let YFBTA know what you did. If it seems appropriate, send a letter or an article to your local newspaper, and maybe your MLA. We can plant a difference!



Ohio Bucke Tree. Photo credit: Stephen Farquharson

It is our hope that you found the pamphlet to be informative. One or more of the suggestions may be sufficient to inspire you take spade in hand.

You can learn more about the YFBTA by visiting our website yfbta.com.

You can also find previously published newsletters at the above website.

YELLOWHEAD FLYAWAY BIRDING TRAIL ASSOCIATION ARBOR DAY

The Yellowhead Flyaway Birding Trail Association (YFBTA) is appreciative of the interest that you have taken in being active during the Arbour Week and Arbour Day period.

ABOUT ARBOR DAY

As long as humans have lived on the earth they have sensed their dependence upon trees and shrubs. Trees provided shelter, food, fuel, tools and weapons, places of safety, habitat for a multitude of life forms. They were an essential part of the interdependence of all living things. They became part of early stories and myths, were praised in poetry and song, inspired dance and the creation of various visual art forms. They recorded the history of weather patterns. With the growth of science and scientific investigation we continue to learn the mystery of tree interactions with each other and with other life forms.

We do not know when, where, or why, people started planting trees and began to manage forests. By the time humans were recording history they had long been involved in such enterprises. We have seen the benefits to humankind of trees and tree growing; and we have seen how the devastation or loss of trees has had disastrous consequences, as can clearly be seen in many parts of our world. Religious and social festivals over many centuries have had tree planting or the nurture of trees as part of celebrations. We have planted trees to mark great events and to celebrate the memory of our heroes and those we have loved.

THE HISTORY OF ARBOR DAY

Arbor Day has ancient and universal roots. Its more recent and familiar story takes us to Nebraska, U.S.A. Much of Nebraska was a treeless plain in 1872. That year, because of the enthusiastic promotional work done by a newly arrived newspaper editor, who with his wife desperately missed the many trees they had left behind them in Connecticut, Nebraska became the first state to celebrate Arbor Day. Over a million trees were planted that spring. Conservationist and publisher J. Morton had begun what would become a worldwide movement. Birdsey Northrop of Connecticut was responsible for globalizing the idea when he visited Japan and delivered his "Arbor Day and Village Improvement" message. He also brought his enthusiasm to Australia, Canada and Europe.

On April 15, 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt issued an "Arbor Day Proclamation to the School Children of the United States" about the importance of planting trees and maintaining national forest reserves. By this date, almost every state was observing an Arbor Day. Roosevelt's remarks on that day contained this observation, "A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as hopeless!"

In 1887, J. Sterling Morton, addressing the State University in Lincoln, Nebraska, noted why Arbor Day was unusual among holidays, "Each of those holidays reposes upon the past, while Arbor Day proposes for the future. It contemplates, not the good and the beautiful of the past generations, but it sketches, outlines, establishes the useful and the beautiful for the ages to come." Speaking of the involvement of schools in Arbor Day, Norton commented, "Arbor Day could not only teach students the importance of trees to the functioning of society, but also make them into 'tree lovers'. A tree sentiment will be created and established which will lead us to recognize and cherish trees as friends."

That might be a good way to describe what Arbor Day/ Arbor Week is – “A special opportunity for us and our communities to recognize and cherish trees as friends”.

ARBOR DAY IN CANADA

The establishment of Arbor Day in Canada is credited to Sir George W. Ross, later Premier of Ontario, when he was Minister of Education (1883-1899). Ross established Arbor Day “to give the school children an interest in making and keeping the school grounds attractive.” The planting of trees and of having school gardens soon became an important part of the life of many schools across Canada.

It is unclear when the celebration of an Arbor Day gradually lost importance within the Province of Saskatchewan. It is fair to say that some of the factors included the closing of rural schools, urbanization, and the autumn celebration of National Forestry Week combined with the unfortunate false assumption that to have both days honoured was unnecessary. National Forestry Day’s emphasis was primarily on the economic value of forestry throughout the country. The Saskatchewan Forestry Association has been an encourager in the work that has culminated in the commitment of the Province of Saskatchewan to make the proclamation and promotion of Arbor Day/Arbor Week an annual event.

ADVOCATING FOR RE-INSTATING ARBOR DAY IN SASKATCHEWAN

The campaign to have an annual proclamation and promotion of Arbor Day was begun (2018) by YFBTA (Yellowhead Flyway Birding Trail Association aka Yellowhead Nature Society). SOS Trees of Saskatoon, Nature Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Forestry Association all added their support to the call. The support of Hon. Warren Kaeding, MLA for Melville-Saltcoats constituency, was enthusiastic and very helpful. The first such proclamation, made in 2020, by Hon. Dustin Duncan, Ministry of Environment, was followed by the proclamation made in 2021 through the same Ministry, then headed by Minister Hon. Warren Kaeding. In 2022 it was announced by Minister Kaeding that the proclamation and promotion would be an annual event. The proclamation this year, 2023, is made by Minister Hon. Dana Skoropad.

Many communities and municipalities have, over the years, named annual spring days or weeks dedicated to planting of trees and shrubs, community beautification, protection of habitat, tidying and cleaning up communities and roadways. The dates were chosen to suit local need, weather, and volunteer availability. The official naming of an Arbor Week and Arbor Day is not intended to prevent communities and organizations planning for events and activities at times more suitable to them!

Special events and the formal planting of trees often involve elected officials and special guests or participants. This is part of Arbor Week/Arbor Day, but the real key to honouring the spirit of Arbor Week/Arbor Day lies with the participation of individuals of all ages, families, neighborhood and ad hoc groupings, organizations of every kind, all producing activities that are locally planned and carried out. Education of ourselves and others, and creative and imaginative conversations are ideally an integral part of the event.

IN PRAISE OF TREES

“Trees are simply amazing. They clean air and water, slow climate change, ease poverty and hunger, prevent species loss, and feed the human soul. All we need to do is plant and care for them.” – Arbor Day Foundation

WHY BRING BACK AND SUPPORT ARBOR DAY/WEEK?

1) Arbor Day will have a positive impact. When schools and community groups participate in activities such as tree planting, environmental clean-ups, care for specific mini ecosystems such as shelterbelts, local sloughs and creeks, we celebrate a sense of community and shared responsibility for the world around us.

2) The celebration fits well with the Government of Saskatchewan’s commitment as stated in the “Climate Strategy Plan for Prairie Resilience”.

“We propose a broad and comprehensive approach, one that connects the very real global problem of climate change to the day-to-day priorities of people. An approach that sets out actions people can see and be a part of. An approach that allows Saskatchewan to grow and prosper while contributing to Canada’s efforts to address climate change.”

3) Connecting tree planting with global issues broadens awareness that we are interconnected with our neighbors and with all parts of the natural world. Arbor Day Foundations in many places respond to disasters such as flooding, fire, drought. They provide knowledge of, and assistance for, projects of reclamation and rejuvenation. We can celebrate people globally who have reclaimed lands ruined by natural disaster, by wars, by thoughtless exploitations or failures to clean up industrial waste, garbage and sewage.

4) Arbor Day invites all to see where environmental awareness is growing. Through science but also through the arts, people of all ages are challenging us to act to save our communities and our planet. We are encouraged to see who are acting as our teachers and mentors.

5) Arbor Day invites us to remember and celebrate the people who have been tree planters, local and provincial forestry and horticultural pioneers – and who there is around us who plays a part in planting trees and beautifying our surroundings.

6) Arbor Day provides opportunity for us to see how the loss of habitat (including trees) harms or endangers many species of birds, insects such as bees, various animals. And, we see how planting trees slows or reverses that loss.

7) Arbor Day emphasizes the importance of reforestation and encourages the celebration of special times such as National Forestry Week in the fall, and the global necessity of exercising a careful stewardship of our forests.

We can consider why governments across Western Canada and the U.S.A. encouraged the planting of farm shelterbelts in response to the drought of the 1930’s. We can consider the social, personal and ecological costs that can result from the loss of these shelterbelts, farmsteads, and road allowances.

8) Arbor Day reminds us of the importance of community and of communities reclaiming their power. Arbor Day activities do not have to be costly. They don’t have to be highly organized. They don’t need to wait for someone to tell us what to do. A recent study in the U.S.A. showed that one of the most serious social losses over the past two decades was in the declining number of people putting community involvement as a priority, and naming it as a significant value in their lives.

9) Arbor Day proves again that we are healthier, happier people when we are involved with friends and neighbors in doing something good, and especially when that connects us with the earth, with trees, with the wonderful world of nature.