

Nebraska's GreatPlants 2005 Selections

The GreatPlants program is a joint effort of the Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association and the Nebraska State-wide Arboretum. They select and promote exceptional plants that are reliably hardy, easy to care for and ornamentally worthwhile. Look for them at your local nursery.

Previous year's selections can be found online at arboretum.unl.edu

Tree: Ginkgo

Ginkgo biloba. Undoubtedly one of the most distinct and beautiful of all deciduous trees. The leaves can turn a brilliant golden yellow in the fall. One of the oldest trees growing on earth. Usually pyramidal in youth, in old age, a well developed Ginkgo is an impressive sight, forming large picturesque branches and handsome bark. Female trees



Ginkgo



Korean Spirea

produce an undesirable fruit after 20 years, so for this reason, usually only male trees have been selected. A durable tree for difficult landscape situations. Recommended male selections are 'Autumn Gold' and 'Princeton Sentry'. Ginkgo's reach a height of 50 to 60 feet and a width of 30 to 40 feet. Hardy to zone 4.

Shrub: Korean Spirea

Spiraea fritschiana. This exciting little spirea is not very common in the landscape but offers dark green

foliage and large clusters of flat-topped, white flowers in May and June. The creamy white flowers contrast nicely with the rich green foliage. The serrated leaves turn a good yellow in the fall on this dense, mounded shrub. Used as a filler plant or as a low massing plant, this Spirea will perform in a variety of tough conditions. The height is 2 to 3 feet and width is 3 to 4 feet. Hardy to zone 4.

Perennial: Dwarf Blue Indigo

Baptisia minor. An exciting plant for the hot, sunny border. It looks like a miniature version of Blue False Indigo, *Baptisia australis*. A Nebraska Statewide Arboretum introduction from seed collected in north central Kansas. The pea-shaped indigo blue flower spikes appear in spring, displayed nicely above the blue-green foliage. The showy flowers are reminiscent of lupines and are a favorite of bumble bees. In late summer and fall interesting seedpods develop from the flowering stalks, changing from a soft green to a rich black in autumn and

persisting into winter. Native Americans called this plant 'Rattle Pod', because the hard seeds rattle around inside the pods. A tough, durable plant for the hot, sunny border that looks good all season long. It is only 15 to 24 inches tall and hardy to zone 4. This is a great plains native.



Dwarf Blue Indigo

Grass: Sideoats Grama

Bouteloua curtipendula. This durable native grass has delicate, oat-like spikelets that hang to one side of the inflorescence in summer, arching to 3



Sideoats Grama

feet above the basal mound of gray-green foliage. Numerous seed heads are purplish when they first appear in June and July, then bleach to straw color as they age. Autumn foliage is generally bronze-purple to orange and red, to straw-colored in winter. Particularly handsome when backlit by the sun or combined with little bluestem and prairie wildflowers. It spreads slowly to form a dense mat of foliage that is ideal for erosion control, choking out weeds or mass plantings. Hardy to zone 4. (MJF)

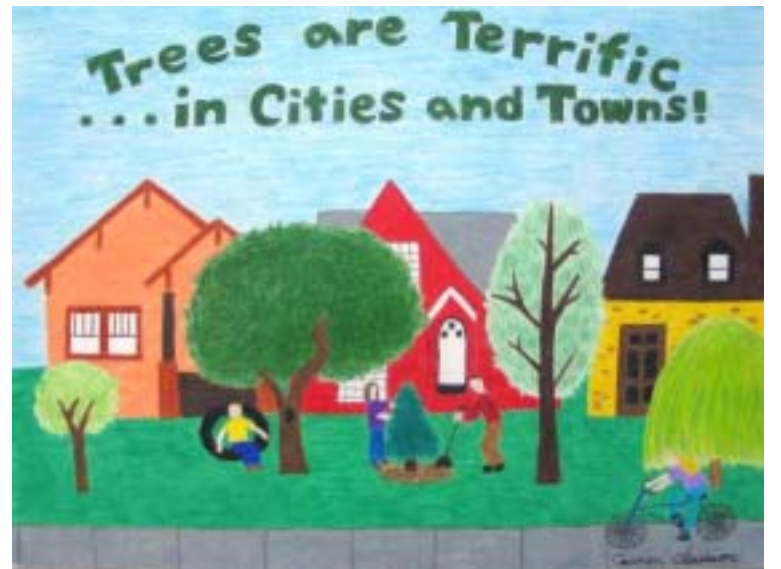
Arbor Day Celebrates Future

Arbor Day, the Tree Planter's Holiday, started more than a century ago in Nebraska, is still going strong today. In January 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the State Board of Agriculture a tree planting holiday be observed in Nebraska on April 10, 1872. He proposed the holiday be named Arbor Day and its purpose, "to urge upon the people of the State the vital importance of tree planting." His efforts were successful and more than a million trees were planted in Nebraska on the first Arbor Day.

In 1885, Arbor Day became a legal holiday in Nebraska, to be observed on Morton's birthday, April 22. Since 1989, Nebraska has celebrated Arbor Day on the last Friday in April. Tree planting is as important now as it was to our grandparents. In fact, it is even more important now since many trees must be planted to keep up with the loss of trees and forests to land clearing, fire and urban development. By replacing these trees we can be sure we will always have forests and trees for our future.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Arbor Day is its emphasis on the future. In the words of J. Sterling Morton, "Other holidays repose on the past. Arbor Day proposes for the future." We learn to plant trees to show our hope for the future and our concern for those who will come after us.

Why is Arbor Day so important to Nebraskans?



The 2004 Arbor Day Poster Contest Nebraska winner was Carmen Claesson (who is a Lancaster County 4-H member).

Certainly the holiday's origin in our state contributes to our enthusiasm. But even more important is the scarcity of trees and forests in Nebraska. We appreciate trees because we can easily see what life would be like without them.

Nebraskans should be proud of their tree planting heritage. We can feel satisfied

in knowing this state is a more beautiful place to live and a better place for the future.

To celebrate Arbor Day this year consider planting a tree in your yard, neighborhood, school yard, local park or city square. To find out more about Arbor Day, go to www.arborday.org (MJF)

Benefits of Trees

- Trees provide more benefits than just shade and aesthetic beauty. Trees also:
- help cleanse and purify the air by absorbing carbon dioxide, catching dust particles and other pollutants, and giving off oxygen
 - moderate building temperatures and conserve energy by insulating homes and buildings and providing windbreaks
 - reduce run-off and erosion
 - screen out "eyesores" in the landscape and frame good views in addition to creating privacy, if desired
 - help increase the resale value of a home

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

Seed bare spots in your fescue or bluegrass lawn.

Consider planting flowers which may be dried for winter arrangements. Some of the best are strawflower, statice, celosia and globe amaranth.

Do not restrict yourself to buying plants in bloom. Petunias blooming in the pack are often rootbound or overgrown and after planting will actually be set back and cease to bloom for about a month. Plants without blossoms will actually bloom sooner and will grow better as well.

To extend the blooming period of gladiolus, plant early, middle and late-season selections each week until the middle of June. Choose a sunny location and plant the corms four to six inches deep and six to eight inches apart.

Scatter annual poppy seeds in flower borders. The fine seeds need not be covered. The plants grow rapidly and provide colorful flowers in early summer.

In a sunny location with poor soil, plant nasturtiums for a colorful show. They require warm soil to sprout and start blooming in about 50 days. Too much water and fertilizer produces excess leaves and few flowers.

When chrysanthemums show signs of life, dig up and divide large plants. Discard woody portions and replant divisions 12 to 15 inches apart.

Cut flower stalks back to the ground on daffodils, hyacinths and other spring flowering bulbs as the flowers fade. Do not cut the foliage until it dies naturally. The leaves are necessary to produce strong bulbs capable of reflowering next year.

Do not add organic matter to the soil when planting trees. It does not help the plant become established and it may create conditions that encourage the roots to stay inside the planting hole instead of spreading to surrounding soil. Do dig a large planting hole, but fill it with the original soil removed from it.

The last Friday in April is National Arbor Day. Plant a tree or support an organization which does.

Prune spring blooming shrubs, such as forsythia and spirea, after they have completed flowering.

Remove sticks, rocks and other debris from your lawn to prevent damaging your lawnmower or injuring yourself when mowing. Check your lawnmower and other lawn care equipment in preparation for the coming season.

Put a birdhouse in the garden to attract insect eating friends.

Measure the rainfall with a rain gauge posted near the garden so you can tell when to water. The garden needs about one inch of rain per week from April to September. (MJF)