

An Arborist takes  
care of a tree for life.



# OUT ON A LIMB

WINTER 2021, VOLUME 41, ISSUE 4



Do you know this young American Soldier? Story  
on page 11.

## THE UNTOLD STORY

By: *Jim Keepers, Western Field Day Attendee*

It has been years since your association held an official western field day. Two “Burr Oak Canyon” events were held several years ago and in 2016, the Western Field Day in Gering/Scottsbluff covered Plant Health Care. The most recent western Nebraska event was the 2021 Fall Field Day, “Ash Hollow,” held in Lewellen, Nebraska, on September 29-30, 2021.



*The animal greeters just outside of the  
Lewellen Lodge*

The City of Lewellen is located in Garden County (northwest corner of the county) and has a 2020 population of 189, making it the 342nd largest city in Nebraska. Don't let the size of the town fool you. They do get a lot of visitors during the summer, and Lake McConaughy is close by. I realized I had reached the paradise section of Nebraska according to the residents of the area. I must say Nebraskans living in this area of the state are unique people.



*Ash Hollow Bluffs*



*Windlass Hill, you can still see some of the  
wagon wheel ruts*

It was the first time I have ever driven to this area of Nebraska, and after leaving the City of Ogallala, I thought I had taken a wrong turn. The road just seemed to go on and on. The only vehicles I saw were the tractor-trailers flying past me. Once I drove past the large Lewellen City Sign, I knew I had reached my destination. Now I needed to find the quaint Lewellen Lodge. After passing some of the local livestock greeters (see above photo), I ran into the Lodge. The Lodge does have a history; it was first a hospital and then a senior age home. Compared to the WWII tents I have slept in, it was great. It had all the comforts of home with hot water and cable TV, so what more could I ask for? One drawback of staying in Lewellen is there were no cafes open in the evening and I didn't want to drive again after spending 6 hours on the road. So, I bought items from the local gas station and used my room microwave to heat it

up, just like eating military rations. I did take a walking tour of Lewellen after dinner, and it has some old town businesses, but it does have a great art gallery, and I was lucky to get a tour even though it was closed to the public. It must have been my charming manner that convinced the owner to let me in. I was very surprised by the artwork in the gallery.

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## A QUARTERLY UPDATE OF THE NEBRASKA ARBORISTS ASSOCIATION

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### SUBMIT ARTICLES:

If you have anything you would like to submit for inclusion in the Quarterly Update, please contact Jim Keepers at [jlkeepers45@gmail.com](mailto:jlkeepers45@gmail.com) or (402) 332-0715 or (402) 618-8837.

*Photo contributions throughout  
courtesy of Jim Keepers.*

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



In November 2013, I attended my first Tree Care Industry Expo (TCI Expo), a tree care equipment and possibilities wonderland. It was a truly formative experience in my life and changed the trajectory of my business. I remember very well getting my butt chewed at my first safety class because I admitted I thought wearing chaps was overkill and unnecessary. It was an eye-opening and humbling experience that has stuck with me.

I further remember how professional - and consequentially successful - many tree care business owners were at the Expo. Back then, I was stuck in the race to the bottom: How cheap can I bid the job? How many corners can I cut? Etcetera, etcetera. As it turns out, this is no way to thrive, nor stay safe and alive, in arboriculture. Because of that first Expo, I turned my approach to tree care on its head and have now been on the NAA board for seven years, currently serving as your president.

It is now November 2021, and I've just returned from the TCI Expo '21 with several of my team members. I was delighted to see that their first Expo experience was much like my own eight years ago. The consensus from each of them was, "Wow!" "I had no idea," "Can we implement that at our company?" and "I can't wait to go back next year!" TCI Expo is a big deal, and every professionally minded arborist should attend at least once. In the meantime, we are very fortunate to live in a state with such a strong and active arborist association of our own. The upcoming Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference is a fantastic way to experience professionalism in our industry and continue our education network with peers and develop mentorships. I hope to see you on January 17-18, 2022.

Indeed, I am very honored to be the president of the NAA. But we are one association in a low population state, not known for its trees. The truth is, we live in a fishbowl, and we cannot possibly know how small it is until we get outside and see how big the world is around us.

Now go off into the great big world and bring back what resonates with you.

All the best,  
Jeff Grewe, President, Nebraska Arborist Association

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### *Save the Date!*

#### Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference

*"Remembering the Past to Build on the Future"*

Monday & Tuesday, January 17-18, 2022

*Embassy Suites, Lincoln, Nebraska*

#### NAA Certification Exam

Monday, January 17, 2022

Embassy Suites, Lincoln, Nebraska

1:30 – 4:45 p.m.

#### NAA Winter Tree ID Class

Date to be established (February 2022)

VFW Hall & Wayne Park, Waverly, Nebraska

# ARBORISTS SPOTLIGHT

By Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator

With the closing of another stressful and challenging year because of COVID, I wanted to end this year's article on an uplifting note.

I wanted to feature an individual who loves trees and has tried to educate new and present Arborists. The first name coming to mind was Eric Berg, but with his passing, I asked myself the following question: Who would Eric recommend I select to write about in my article? I first thought of Bob Henrickson because he is a great plant guy. On the other hand, I was looking for someone who is a tree person following in Eric's shoes. I then thought of Graham Herbst and Chrissy Land, two young Nebraska Foresters and Certified Arborists filling the positions of Community Forester Specialists for Eastern and Western Nebraska. These two individuals are doing a great job, but I still was looking for an individual who has set the standards for tree education, been in the Arborist career field for a long time and has provided strong support of the NAA.



**Justin Evertson**

While attending the Western Nebraska "Ash Hollow" Summer Field Day and listening and talking to one specific speaker, I decided I had found the individual I wanted to write up about to close out 2021 on a high note.

The individual being honored this quarter has spent numerous years working in the Arborist career field and giving up his time and talents to educate the general public and his fellow Arborist about the care of Nebraska trees. This individual worked together with Bob Henrickson when they were both University of Nebraska, Lincoln interns. He started his official tree career working for the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) back in 1990. He then moved over to the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) with the merging of these two agencies back in 2010. He now holds the position of "Green Infrastructure Coordinator" for the Nebraska Forest Service. I want to introduce Justin Evertson, a member of the Nebraska Arborists Association and Certified International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Justin also carries the title of Nebraska's one and only "Waverly Tree Guy."

After my diligent search for that particular person for my closing year Arborist Spotlight article, let us look at how Justin became such a great person to be around during his tree instructional events.

Justin was born in January of 1965, in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. We are talking about a true young western Nebraska tree lover. His mother, Peggy, is still with us, and I know she is still trying to teach her son Justin instructions on how not to tell corny jokes. His father, Mick, is deceased. He has four brothers Shaun, Wade, Andy, and Matt, and one sister Jenny. He attended Kimball County High School and played football, basketball, baseball, and track (pole vaulting). No wonder he has so much energy. He attended the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) and majored in Architecture and Community Planning.

He met his charming wife Tammy in high school and dated her through their school years. They were in the same grade in school as well. He made the right decision and asked Tammy to marry him the summer after they graduated. They were married on August 18, 1984, and they have been married for 37 years. Tammy is presently an accounting manager and has a bachelor's degree from Doane University. I was fortunate to obtain a lot of information about Justin from Tammy and I want to thank her very much for taking the time to talk about him.

Let's now look at Justin and Tammy's family. Their oldest daughter Jessie has followed in her mother's footsteps and is an accountant for Capital One. Their son Sam is in the IT profession and works as a systems engineer for TELCOR Inc. Their daughter-in-law is Lauren, and they have a grandson, Wilder, who is two years old. Wilder LOVES his "PaPa" Justin. Tammy told me Justin's 'Beagle Buddy' was a well-known fixture in Waverly for many years running around the parks while Justin planted trees and shrubs. You can see Justin had a unique bond between himself and his dog. Let's hope a new dog will be in Justin's future.

Justin has been working for the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Forest Service since 1990. During his 31 years, he has traveled the state spreading the news about the benefits of trees. He has also been one of your association's key speakers and instructor for the NAA's Arborist School and the NAA's Great Plains Summer and Winter Conferences. I still remember Justin being the master of ceremony at the NAA's 29 Charter Dinner at the Arbor Day Lodge. He did an outstanding job and helped make it special for our association.



**Justin presenting at the NAA/ NNA joint summer field day at Great Plains Nursery 2018**

Because of Justin's outstanding teaching ability, he received the Nebraska Arborists Association's Educator of the Year Award for 2006, and he was recognized for his teaching ability and awarded the 2018 Educator of the Year Award. So, you can see that our association members think highly of Justin's educational expertise.

*Continued on next page...*

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Like most youth, Justin enjoyed tree climbing and became interested in trees because of the shade they provided on his parent's farm. He developed his interest in trees while working on the UNL Campus Landscape crew as a student and working with Kim Todd's on-campus planting projects. He has been involved in Waverly's parks since 1995. He is not in charge of them but is allowed a lot of latitude in tree planting and landscaping.

Tammy told me Justin tells corny jokes as it helps him relax before giving a talk. If more of our tree-related speakers would start their presentations with a corny joke, they might feel more relaxed too.

Justin has helped improve the Waverly community by being on the Waverly Park Committee and the Waverly Planning Commission. His actions have helped Waverly become an Arbor Day Tree USA City. He has also taken a key interest in supporting groups like the local boy scouts, Kiwanis, and Rotary.

Besides his family and his work with the trees, most of Justin's limited free time is spent building things and making home improvements. He also enjoys traveling, especially to Virginia and Tennessee, where the trees are big and plentiful. You can feel Justin's mood change when he talks about the trees he saw during a family trip.

Now, let's look at what Justin's coworkers and the Waverly City officials think of him. Bill Gerdes, Mayor of Waverly, was the individual who told me about Justin's unofficial title, "Waverly Tree Guy." I want to make sure I include the following quote from Mayor Gerdes about Justin. "Justin is one of those silent community volunteers that does so much for us all the time but doesn't get the accolades he deserves." "JUSTIN IS THE BEST..." Based on the Mayor's remarks, I believe Justin would live in the Waverly parks 24 hours a day, seven days a week if he didn't have a full-time job and such a special family. Shayna Murrell, Waverly Parks and Recreation Director, told me Justin is always willing to give advice and training whenever needed for Waverly tree maintenance. Because of his efforts, their parks look amazing. When I asked Murrell to describe Justin, she said the following: "Justin truly is a 'one of a kind' guy, and we are lucky to have him in Waverly!"

So, what does Karma Larsen, Justin's colleague, have to say about him? Larsen told me he is one of the most genuinely humble people she has ever known. Besides being a gifted presenter, he is a fantastic writer and can write at the drop of a hat. To sum up Larsen's description, she says: "He's truly one of my favorite people in the world, and I'm so thankful to have had the privilege of knowing and working with him."



**Justin instructing NAA tree ID class 2015**

I cannot end this Arborist Spotlight on Justin Evertson without giving Bob Henrickson a few words about Justin, his coworker. I decided to insert Bob's comments instead of trying to summarize what he had to say.

"Justin and I started our Public Gardening careers working for UNL Landscaping Services back in the mid-'80s. Our supervisor, Roland 'Rollie' Peters, was getting close to retirement. We worked with Rollie every day, riding up to our area of campus seated on a small trailer, pulled by a little old tractor, driving around 10 miles per

hour. We were a couple of gung-ho college students, ready to work hard and fast! Rollie, not so much. We would pull up to a job site and wait for instruction on what to do. Rollie would say, 'Now don't get in a big hurry to get this done, our boss will find another job to do after this one.' We didn't listen very well, and we worked fast. I think it kind of annoyed Rollie. We would all be packed into the cab of a pickup in the wintertime, usually headed out to empty garbage cans or scoop snow. Rollie was a smoker and liked to smoke a lot, in the pickup, with his window merely cracked open. We would sit in front of the job site, pickup idling, Rollie smoking, 'No need to get in a big hurry, there will be another job waiting for



**Justin receiving his second NAA Educator of the Year Award from NAA president Lon Nutter 2018**



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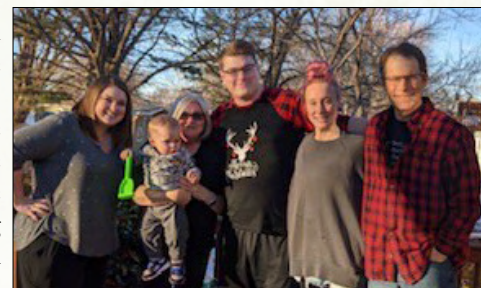
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us.' Justin would open his window all the way and stick his head out to catch some air. Rollie had a signature saying, "Yep, ahhh" Justin will get it!"

Bob Hendrickson continues about his early years working with Justin at NSA. "I started working for the NSA back in 2000. Justin had already been working for the NSA since the '90s. My first summer, I did a lot of traveling around the state with Justin, getting to know our partners and affiliated arboretum sites. We headed out west on the interstate one day, spending the night in the Panhandle. The next day we drove back out in the backroads of greater Nebraska, stopping in towns I had not even heard of. In all, we made 18 stops along the way, seeing green places and meeting people that were implementing grant projects funded by the NSA. I was very impressed with how he could organize all those stops and know all these plant people. In every town we stopped at, Justin would make sure we cruised around town to see if we could spot any notable trees or unusual tree species in their community. I'm checking my watch, and thinking 'aren't we going to be late for the next stop?' I was even more impressed with the power of the cell phone, how he had all those contact numbers, calling to let them know we are running a little late, be there soon!! It's important to slow down and smell the roses, look at what's being planted, and find a few diamonds in the rough."



**Christmas Family Photo**

Justin's uniqueness was shown during the 'Memorial Planting for Eric Berg' on Saturday, October 30th, 2021. Under Justin's guidance and leadership, a group of individuals took the time to remember a close friend, Eric, on a beautiful Saturday morning. Please see the related story titled "Remembering a Good Friend" also in this NAA newsletter issue. Justin's actions to line up this event show his true nature, love, and respect for his fellow arborists.



**Justin and Tammy's Wedding Photo - August 1984**

I know my end-of-the-year Arborist Spotlight is a little on the long side, but it is hard to cut it short when writing about someone like Justin Evertson. I have been fortunate to have known Justin Evertson for over 20 years, and I feel he deserves to be featured in my end-of-the-year Arborist Spotlight. He has greatly affected my Arborist career and many others in the Arboriculture, Forestry, and Horticulture career fields and throughout Nebraska. He continues to do his mission to educate others in all aspects of tree care and has never asked for any special recognition or to be singled out for his accomplishments.

In closing, I am fortunate to have this direct quote from Justin from Tammy when they talked about the Waverly parks. "I enjoy reading about science and learning about the natural world around us. I would like to see more people use science, reason, and rational thinking as guiding principles for living our lives and interacting with each other. I wish we would shed our religious and tribal superstitions and ideologies that do more to separate us than bring us together. We are all part of the same human tribe, and it seems like reason and cooperation will get us farther than hate and division."

I want to encourage the readers of this article to send Justin a thank you card for all he has done for the NAA. I know many of my readers don't use snail mail, but let's make an exception this time. His mailing address is Justin Evertson, NFS/NSA, 203 GA, Forest Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-00815. I know Justin would get a kick out of the thank you cards.

While you are attending the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference, please stop by the NSA/NFS exhibitor booth and thank Justin for his time, talents, and willingness to share his knowledge with others. It will be too late to thank him when the 'Tree God' calls him to rest in peace among her mighty tree roots shaded by their mighty branches.

## **SILENT AUCTION DONATIONS**

By: Jim Keepers, 2022 Conference Committee Chair

I know it is early to talk about donations for our silent auction at the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference, but the early bird does get the worm.

At our last winter conference, we were able to raise over \$5,000 for our education fund. That was the amount we could spend on scholarships for the fall 2021 Arborist School since we could not have a 2021 conference.

If you are buying a piece of equipment, getting an equipment item fixed, or buying company supplies, think about asking for a donation for the NAA Silent Auction. Please send me an email with the description of the item donated, the retail cost of the item, who donated the item, and their mailing address, phone number, and email address. I need all this information before the end of December so the silent auction forms can be made out.



*Continued from page 1...* After a good night's sleep in the Lodge's queen-size bed, I proceeded to drive to the Lewellen Tiger Den located on the far west end of Lewellen. Since Lewellen is so small, I could have almost walked the distance. The Tiger Den is the retired Lewellen High School. The Den operates as a non-profit, donation-based organization, providing lunches to the community throughout the week. The Tiger Den was the location for all of our two-day indoor field day presentations. After completing the first day, the ladies at the Tiger Den provided a BBQ supper at the Ash Hollow Park picnic area. I must say the 'Tiger Den Ladies' provided us with ample and delicious food. One of the lady volunteers (who has two sons in the Marines) even offered to cook me some eggs for breakfast the next morning when she learned I was retired from the military after 30 years.



**David Olson talking about Ash tree problems at the bottom of Ash Hollow**

As you can see, these ladies tried to make sure we received ample food. A "gratuity food jar" was set up to show our appreciation, and the money collected was given to the 'Tiger Den volunteers. Acker told me: "There was a great pleasure from the 'Tiger Den Ladies' in the sharing of the money from the jar."

Our field day conference was made up of a diverse group of individuals whose backgrounds included: Arborists, Foresters, Nursery operators, Tree Board members, University Educators, NRD Personnel, and even retirees. These individuals came from different locations within the state of Nebraska. I want to list a few of the attendees so you can get a better idea of who attended and from what location. John Bohrer, City of Bennington, and both Tree Board Members of Certified NE Arborists came from Eastern Nebraska. Jeff Kennedy and Bruce Hoffman, Certified Arborists, came from South and Southwest Nebraska. Janis Imel, Peaceful Prairie Nursery, nurserywoman from Western Nebraska. From Pensacola, Florida, Shelley Mangram, on her way to attend the Nebraska Master Naturalist classes. The rest of the attendees had NRD, Tree Board, university, and government agencies who had some tree backgrounds and were from many different locations within Nebraska. Invitations and phone calls were made to tree folks in Colorado and Wyoming, but sadly, no one from these two states accepted the invitation. I feel they missed out on a great western Nebraska educational tree event and something to remember for years to come.

The "Ash Hollow" fall event was a true Field Day with educational presentations in the morning within the Tiger Den's old high school gym and then outside field locations. When we moved outside, we were able to visualize the information we learned in class and apply it to the locations the events took place in - such as Ash Hollow and Windlass Hill just outside of Lewellen.

I can now hear the reader say, "what is important about a windy little hill and hollow with Ash trees?" If you spent long hours walking, riding a horse, or inside a covered wagon across the prairies, this hill provided major challenges and a hollow with fresh spring water and firewood for their campfires.



**The heart of Lewellen, its downtown section**

Before I enlighten you about the importance of Ash Hollow and Windless Hill, I want to tell you about the speakers who gave presentations. Chrissy Land, NFS, Western Community Forester, is a dynamic speaker who presented the Field Day opening remarks. She also introduced George Acker, Certified NE Arborist, who was the individual that spearheaded this event. As usual, Acker didn't take any credit for his efforts, said a few words, and thanked us all for coming. Tamara Cooper, Ash Hollow, Superintendent/Historian, and Galen Wittrock, South Platte NRD, then talked about Ash Hollow's history, geology, paleontology, and archeology. Amanda Filipi lightened up the mood of the educational session during her talk about bird species hybridization in Ash Hollow. Filipi's big joke of the day was asking us to spend time looking for that ten-pound bird that had developed over time in Ash Hollow. We never discovered the bird, but our eyes were on the lookout to find it. It was fun looking for it, and I would have loved to have gotten a picture of it!

The keynote speaker for the event was Dr. Elliott West, Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Arkansas. I cannot do justice to the professor's presentation. I will say I did learn a lot about how the horse changed the life of the Great Plains Indians and how they didn't live year-round on the plains but spent the winter in the Nebraska hollows like the one called Ash Hollow. Justin Evertson, NFS, Green Infrastructure Coordinator, again presented an exciting educational presentation on the "Trees of the Great Plains." While we toured Ash Hollow, Dave Olson, UNL Forest Health Specialist, pointed out the various Ash tree problems and explained the threat of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

After having great lunches at the Tiger Den on both days of the event, we ventured into Ash Hollow, climbed Windlass Hill, and had the great honor to see the Witness Tree. The tree rests on providing prosperity and is not open to the general public.

The rest of this article will center on Ash Hollow and Windlass Hill and I will leave the story of the Witness Tree along Blue Creek. I must say I was honored to see this majestic tree and learn why it is so sacred to our Native Americans and its role in our 'American History.'

Work is in progress to line up a propagator for the Witness Tree.

Ash Hollow is located 3 miles southeast of Lewellen, Nebraska, on U.S. Highway 26. It became a Nebraska State Park in 1962. Windless Hill and the old Ash Hollow Cemetery are also located in the same general area.

Ash Hollow is a beautiful area with ample wood and water. It is only 4 miles long, 1,000 ft. wide, with an average depth of 250 ft. It has some beautiful white gateway cliffs carved by an inland sea. The Hollow is named after a group of Ash Trees. With the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), the fear is the Ash trees will be destroyed. At this time, I don't know if there will be any plan of action to save any of the majestic Ash still in the Hollow through tree injection. I still remember one of the mighty Ash growing out of one of the cliffs and it was a sight to behold.

Sweet spring water and ample firewood were the key reasons the pioneers traveling west along the Oregon and California trails stopped to take shelter and rest. Peaceful Sioux Indians also used the hollow as their encampments in the winter. It was said, Ash Hollow was an oasis-like refuge for those crossing a very harsh and dry prairie. We had the opportunity to walk through the Ash Hollow along the trails, and I was very impressed with the beauty of nature in the Hollow. We did drive up to the park's visitor's center, and we were able to have a panoramic view of the valley. It just took my breath away. Ruts etched by the wagon wheels going west are still seen on the Hollow's canyon bluffs. The bluffs have only changed with the increase of the Eastern Red Cedar into the hollow, but the bluffs still look magnificent. Ash Hollow has been described as an "outright marvel" because of its unique beauty. By 1840 the wood in Ash Hollow was vanishing because of mass tree cutting and erosion. Efforts have been made to remove the Cedar, but with limited funds and manpower, that is very hard to do.

Now let us turn our attention to Windlass Hill. I had the misconception that wagon trails going west always followed a straight line. At least the TV show when I was growing up showed them moving one wagon after another. I guess when we read about the Oregon Trail, we think of a path with limited width.

This is incorrect; most wagon trains had wagons three to four across (some records show 12 wagons across). The prairie had no trees or other obstacles to stop their progress until the wagons reached Ash Hollow and were forced to go single file down Windlass Hill. I have been unable to find any information about how or why this hill was named Windlass. It could be that this was the last windy hill they had to descend before entering Ash Hollow so it got the nickname of Windlass Hill. From the bottom of the hill, it doesn't look like it was an obstacle for a wagon to transverse down from the top. On the other hand, when you get to the top of the hill and look down, you can see this hill was a major obstacle, and it was a challenge to move the wagons from the flat prairie down to the entrance of Ash Hollow. They didn't hoist the wagons down the hill like some old movies showed but drove them down with their livestock pulling the wagons. The steepness of the hill was a major obstacle, and to slow the speed of the wagons, they locked their wheels to stop them from turning. This did reduce the speed of the wagon but increased the friction. I am still not sure how the livestock leading the wagons could keep their balance and not cause the wagon to crash down the hill.



**Graham Herbst & John Bohrer  
descending the wind walking  
path off of Windlass Hill.**

Within a 10 to 15 year period, over "200,000 to 350,000 pioneers" went straight off the top of Windlass Hill and into Ash Hollow. With gold being discovered in California, migration/expansion were driving factors causing people to travel west. I know I would not have the courage to cross the vast/dry prairie and then face going over Windlass Hill. The need for clean fresh water, ample firewood, and a safe campsite were major driving factors causing the pioneers to go over Windlass Hill.

If you get a chance, I do recommend you take some time to visit one of Nebraska's unique state parks to see the beauty and sweeping vistas contained in this area. With the threat of EAB, the beauty of the mighty Ash trees will be gone. The visitor's center is a must-stop on your park tour to learn about the entire history of Ash Hollow and Windlass Hill.

I hope I will be able to write up about the famous 'Witness Tree' in the March issue of the newsletter. This tree does have an interesting story to tell. Before closing, I want to list the individuals and organizations who played a crucial role in planning and conducting this great Ash Hollow Fall Field Day.

The success of this field day can be attributed to the following outstanding field day planning team individuals: George Acker, A + Community Tree Care, Ogallala, NE (Local Tree advocate), Tamara Cooper, Superintendent/Historian, Ash Hollow, Chrissy Land, NFS, Western Community Forester, Galen Wittrock, South Platte NRD, Sidney, Nebraska, Kathi Schildt, NAA Executive Director, staff members Andee, Jennifer and other NAA staff. Assistance was also provided by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the South Platte Natural Resource District.

A special thanks go out to the following five organizations who worked together diligently to set up this education event: Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Game & Parks, Nebraska Arborists Association, South Platte & Upper Platte NRDs Additional support to the Tiger Dens came from Rankin's ECHO Dealership & A + Community Tree Care. I feel educational events like The Ash Hollow, Fall Field Day, sponsored by the NAA, reflect highly on your association and our membership. Yes, more events of this type need to be held throughout the state of Nebraska and especially in western Nebraska.

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# REMEMBERING A GOOD FRIEND

By: Jim Keepers, Certified NE Arborist



**Eric with his dog**

On Saturday, October 30th at 10:00 am, a group of Arborists, Nurserymen, NFS/NSA members, Foresters, and family members gathered at Waverly's Wayne Park to honor a great friend by planting trees and shrubs in his honor. This event was spearheaded by Justin Evertson, "Waverly Tree Guy." The planting event was not a formal university or city event. The attendees were just a group of Eric's friends who wanted to find a way to keep alive the memory of Eric Berg, former Nebraska Forest Service Community Program Leader, for future generations. Three former Nebraska Arborists Association presidents Bruce Hoffman, Kent Holm, and Jim Keepers attended the event.

To capture Eric Berg's full Nebraska Arborists Association (NAA) contributions and his Arborist/Forestry achievements, I ask you to read the lead article on the NAA's summer newsletter again, "Remembering a Good Friend, Forester, and Arborist."

It is very hard for me to put into words since I am not accomplished about writing about my friendship with Eric. We did disagree on the best Arborist Certification, NAA or ISA, to have but in the end both our goals were and will be the training of high-quality Nebraska Arborists. If the Good Lord allows me to continue to work in and around our Nebraska trees, I will always remember Eric Berg as a friend and tree lover.

I want to give Justin a special thanks for spearheading this event. If you are interested in finding out more about Justin, spend some time reading the Arborist Spotlight article in this December issue. I also want to thank Bruce Hoffman from Common Scents Greenhouse and Nursery, Heather and Brian Byers from Great Plains Nursery, and Bob Henrickson from Nebraska Statewide Arboretum for donating the trees and shrubs for the planting.



**Group shot left to right of Bruce Hoffman, Former wife Ann Hogan, Kaylie Hogan-Schnittker (step daughter) and daughters Lily and Emily Berg. Tree in photo donated by Bruce, Common Scents Greenhouse & Nursery, McCook, Nebraska.**



**Eric's friends pitching in at the planting event.**

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# A SPECIAL OR UNIQUE TREE

By: Jim Keepers, Coordinator NAA Newsletter

I believe evergreens have had a challenging year here in Eastern Nebraska. You hear about Pine Wilt, Tip Blight, Needle Blight, Zimmerman Pine Moth, Spider Mites, and Scale. These are a few of the major disease and insect problems affecting evergreens. Because of this, the trend is not to try new and unusual evergreen trees in our landscape.

I can hear my fellow Arborist thinking, “Jim has gone over the deep end by trying to convince us to get in the evergreen tree planting business. There is not enough time for us to take on a new business task when we are trying to stay ahead of storm-related issues.”

I have decided to feature special and interesting evergreens in my future Special or Unique Tree articles. As all-around trained and experienced Arborists, we need to offer our customers the best service possible. I feel our customers want to know what tree to plant after removing one or to commutate a significant family event. I think our present Nebraska Arborist must be well versed in all aspects of tree care, including planting evergreen trees.



**Cannon Fir needles**



**Cannon Fir tree bark**

To kick off my first featured evergreen, I have selected the Cannon Fir: *Abies Balsamea* Var *Phanerolepis*. The name Cannon is pronounced “Ka-naan” with emphasis on the last syllable. It is also called Western Virginia Balsam fir, and it originated in the hills of West Virginia and Virginia. Some say it is a cross between a Frazer and Balsam fir. It is a newcomer to the landscape market and is featured in the Christmas tree trade like the Concolor Fir. The tree is also used as a windbreak tree, but we recommend planting these trees in the inside instead of outside rows.



**Fall shot Cannon Fir & Freeman Maple**

I can hear the rise of the voices objecting to my selection because Firs have a hard time growing in Eastern Nebraska in the summer because of our high humidity. It might do better in Western Nebraska, but I don't know for sure. I like this tree because it creates a great contrast between its green needles and the Freeman Maple's red leaves in the fall. My photo of the Cannon Fir in the foreground, and the Freeman Maple in the background, shows a great color contrast in the landscape between a conifer and a deciduous tree.

The tree is a medium-sized, pyramidal crown tree reaching 40 to 55 feet in height and 20 to 25 feet in width. Under good growing conditions, the Cannon Fir can grow 1 to 2 feet per year. So, you can see when mature, this Fir tree can be quite large. It has a spire-like tip giving the tree a very formal appearance. The needles are lustrous dark green to flush green, and the silvery stomatic bands on the underside of the needles enhance them to make them stand out compared to other Spruce and Pine trees.



**Upright cones on a Cannon Fir. (Kelly Tree Farm photo)**

The bark of this Fir is ashy gray when young but turns gray-brown when mature. The bark is also deeply furrowed. I have never seen a mature Cannon Fir, but I sure would like the opportunity to see one in all its glory growing in its native location. The cones are upright but disintegrated on the branches, so you don't see any cones on the ground. I have no cones on my tree, just short sticks that hold the cones together. The birds do love the seeds inside the cones. Another unique feature of this tree is that it doesn't shed its needles like other evergreens every three years but holds them for at least ten years.

Kelly Tree Farm in Clarence, Iowa, grows the Cannon Fir, and they state their trees have survived an Iowa temperature of -38F. I recommend you go to the Kelly Tree Farm web page if you are interested in buying this tree.

I am sorry to say I have only one Cannon Fir left on my property. I planted three but lost the other two. I have not given up on this tree and would like to grow some more.

## THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY

By: Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator

I will never regret making the trip to attend the Western Summer Field Day, even though I am not a fan of driving. I want to thank the NAA board for allowing me the opportunity to accomplish photo documentation of NAA events of this type. I also appreciated writing articles for and coordinating the Nebraska Arborists Association (NAA) newsletter for these past many years.

Next to my love of trees, accomplishing photo coverage of a special tree event is my third career in life. So if you have unusual tree removal, please let me know so I can tell your story to the rest of our association members in our NAA newsletter.

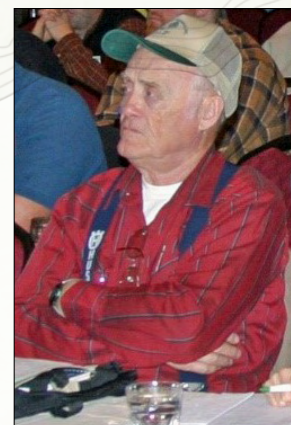
# WE LOST ANOTHER GREAT ARBORIST & A GOOD FRIEND

By: Jim Keepers, Certified NE Arborist

The picture of a young American Soldier featured on the cover of this December issue of the NAA newsletter is an old friend Galen Donley Olsberg. Galen was one of our association's oldest association members and Certified Nebraska Arborist. I am sad to announce his passing on October 5, 2021.

It seems like just yesterday that I had the opportunity to meet Galen and his charming wife, Lucy, during a service project at Joslyn Castle. Lucy and Galen were a team, as husband and wife and they were a team working together at the job site.

As I have previously stated, Galen and his wife, Lucy and I had become good friends. It makes me proud to say I had the opportunity to feature him in one of my NAA newsletter Arborist Spotlight articles. My wife and I would always go to Old Country Buffet off of Center Street on Friday night, and we would always run into Galen and Lucy. This gave us the opportunity to catch up on what they had accomplished in the past week. You can find his information in his Arborist Spotlight article and his obituary in the Omaha World-Herald.



Galen Olsberg at NAA winter Conference

I want to say a few words about this kind and gentle man who enjoyed working in the trees. He was a Korean War veteran from 1952 – 1955 assigned to an Army Ammunition Ordnance Company. He didn't see any action but was stationed in Germany. You go where the Army sends you. He attended the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, majoring in geology. Sometime in the '90s, his interest turned to the trees, and he became an NAA Certified Arborist. Soon after, he started his own business, "Galen's Tree Trimming, Inc."

I still remember seeing Galen and Lucy after he had open-heart surgery. He was still hoping to get back to his Arborist business and driving Lucy all around town. At that time, Lucy didn't have her driver's license, and Galen was her chauffeur. He loved driving Lucy around town, and it was not a burden for him.

Galen became an NAA Certified Arborist on February 12, 2007. Galen and Lucy made the final decision to sell the business in the spring of 2021. He took out an advertisement in the NAA newsletter looking for a buyer. Galen did call me and ask for my advice on how to go about selling the business. I told him he could sell the company's name, equipment, and his customer client list separately. I do regret not contacting him to see if he had any buyers. I don't know the status of his business because of his death. Galen's sister did tell me he was going through all his equipment items and making an inventory. The sad news is that his equipment was in a storage unit, and someone stole all his saws.

I am a firm believer in honoring an individual for their accomplishments before they pass away. I am happy I was able to feature Galen in one of my Arborist Spotlight articles. When I went to the gathering with family and friends, Lucy told everyone I had written about Galen in our NAA newsletter, which made me proud of what I had done for Galen and Lucy. Words do have a meaning. I had the honor of representing your association at Galen's military honors graveside service at the Omaha National Cemetery, Omaha, Nebraska. It is a memorial to a veteran you will never forget!

I want to close with the following words written up in the funeral home's 'Remembrance of Galen.' "His last wishes were to meet his long-lost son and to have his siblings around him one last time. Both those wishes came true, and he was able to pass away peacefully in his sleep on October 5, 2021, having attained the age of 88 years."

If you would like to send a card to Lucy, her address is 5818 S. 141st Plaza, Apt. # 22, Omaha NE 68137-2881.

Galen, rest in peace Good Friend and fellow Nebraska Certified Arborist! You will be missed but not forgotten.

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**"SOMEONE IS SITTING IN THE SHADE TODAY BECAUSE SOMEONE PLANTED A TREE A LONG TIME AGO."**  
- Warren Buffett

# THE ROAD TO MAKING AND USING BIOCHAR

By: Kevin Boos, Julian, Nebraska, Horticulturalist - Intro by: Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator

I am always looking for ways to improve the texture and enhance nutrients in our Eastern Nebraska soils. I discovered the work Kevin Boos was doing with biochar, and I thought this material would be something good to add to the soil when planting trees. Since soil is one of the key elements in tree growth, I have asked Kevin to write up the following article on the making and use of biochar. I hope his article will expand your knowledge about soil improvements. Here is what Kevin has to say about his journey down the road to making and using biochar:

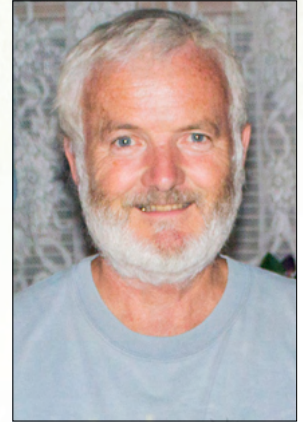


**Biochar oven at 10:00 a.m.**

When I first investigated making biochar, I found out that it was made with heat and a lack of oxygen, a process called pyrolysis. It looked like a lot of work, and I would need a biochar oven, but then I found an article from Mother Earth News on the internet. In it, I read that if you burn wood in a campfire, you have biochar. You could get a bit more by taking a shovel and knocking off pieces of the charred black wood.

I had an old Weber grill and used that to make my first biochar. I started the fire and added more wood. After dousing it with water, I was left with a few gallons of biochar.

I graduated from there to a 55-gallon barrel. The bottom had rusted out, so I had airflow to get the fire going if I put bricks or chunks of wood under it. When I was ready to finish the biochar, I knocked the bricks or wood out from under the barrel and let it sit on the ground. That stopped the flow of oxygen and allowed the wood to turn into biochar rather than burning up. Again, I used water to put out the fire.



**Kevin Boos, Horticulturalist,  
Julian, NE**



**Biochar oven the next day**

Finally, a neighbor gave me a metal box about 3 feet long by 2½ feet wide by 1½ feet tall. That worked even better, and I filled it with paper and small sticks. After lighting it, I added larger pieces of wood and kept it filled during the day. As the wood burned, I knocked it down and added more. During the day, everything in the barrel compressed, eliminating air spaces. By the end of the day, the barrel was packed with hot char. I filled the box with water to extinguish the fire and was left with about 60 gallons of biochar.



**Biochar Oven at 7:00 p.m.**

I have one more way to make biochar. My family likes to sit around a fire in our backyard in the evening and make smores. When we are done, I use a hose to put out the fire. The next day I have about 5-7 gallons of biochar. The prices I found online for biochar are about \$8 to \$10 a gallon. Making smores was never so profitable.

During the last four years, I have made about 6,000 gallons of biochar. I layer the biochar with compost and manure in a process called “charging the biochar.” Without that step, the biochar will reduce fertility for a few years because it will compete with vegetation for the nutrients as it naturally charges in the soil.

Biochar is extremely helpful in improving soil and the environment, but it should not be viewed in isolation. To be truly effective, biochar is one part of a holistic approach to gardening. When used with no-till, cover crops, and not using chemical fertilizers or pesticides, it is part of a method of gardening that works with, instead of against nature.

I grow my vegetables in raised beds about 3 feet wide and bordered by approximately six-inch diameter logs. Once the borders are in place, I remove about 12 inches of soil, put a few inches of biochar in the hole, and dig it in. Over this, I add a layer of logs or branches, then I cover this with layers of soil and charged biochar. After several layers have been added, I have a raised bed ready to plant.

Once the bed is made, I never have to rototill or dig the soil. That is an added benefit because it saves labor and doesn't bring up weed seeds that will sprout on the surface. I cut dead vegetable plants and lay them on the soil to decompose in the fall, thereby adding nutrients for future gardens. If the dead plants could add pathogens, such as fungus from tomato wilt, I put them in a compost pile and hot compost them or burn them. Using leaves, kitchen waste, and garden waste to make compost gives me all the fertilizer I need.

I don't cut the flower stalks until spring, when the new growth is up several inches. This provides habitat and food for birds over the winter. When I do cut the stalks, I leave several inches of the old growth, which the new growth will soon cover. That way, I am providing habitat for wintering beneficial insects and ensuring a food source for the 96 percent of the terrestrial birds that feed insects to their young.

Mycorrhizal fungi live in the soil and are fed sugars that leak out of the roots of plants. In return, they connect the roots to water and nutrients from deep within the soil. Mycorrhizal fungi make a substance called glomalin, which binds soil particles together and forms aggregates, providing a structure that allows water to enter the soil and holds it there, thereby reducing runoff and the need for watering.

Additionally, nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers cause mycorrhizal fungi to stop working and can even kill them. Digging breaks apart the strands it creates in the soil, thereby reducing its effectiveness. Compacted soil reduces fungi growth, so the compost I add and raised beds that I don't walk on improve its effectiveness.

I cover the soil with straw or leaves to protect it, keep it cool, and hold in the moisture. When I harvest one crop, I start another or plant a cover crop. Cover crops, such as crimson clover, turnips, and buckwheat, are not used for food but add nutrients and protect the soil. Protecting the soil keeps carbon from escaping and provides a better environment for organisms living in the soil. With the biochar, these organisms enrich the soil, reducing the need to add water and fertilizers.

I have more garden space than the average person with about 10,000 square feet of flowers, prairie grasses and flowers, and vegetables. You will probably not need anywhere close to the 6,000 gallons of biochar that I made if you have a normal size city lot. Still, even in a small garden, you should see the results: much healthier flower and vegetable plants, bigger yields, and, I believe, more nutritious food.

As a final note, I am 69 years old, and like the rest of us, I'm not getting any younger. I want to be gardening for years to come, and one way to increase the chances of that happening is to have the best soil possible. With: biochar, no till, cover crops, and not using fertilizers and pesticides, I am building soil fertility, structure, and water-holding capabilities, which will make my gardening easier and more productive in the future while reducing my costs, both financially and environmentally.

Not everyone has the space, time, or raw materials to make their own biochar. There is biochar available for sale if you look on the internet, and it is not cheap but remember that it lasts in the soil for thousands of years.

I hope you enjoyed this soil-related article about biochar. I know it is a different article to include in our NAA newsletter, but I feel it will expand your knowledge of soil improvement. All trees need great soils to reach their maturity and survive our ever changing Nebraska environment. A Nebraska source for biochar is Barcel Landscape Products in Bellwood, Nebraska. The company is working with Heather Nobert at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) to research the use of biochar in our Nebraska soils.

## CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP TRAIN

The conference sponsorships train is collecting funding so it can roll out of the station in Omaha and make the trip to Lincoln's Embassy Suites for the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference starting on the 17th of January 2022. The goal for this train trip is \$8,000 (currently at \$6,700).

### LISTING OF CURRENT CONFERENCE SPONSORS:

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# THE 2022 CONFERENCE IS HAPPENING

By: Jim Keepers, NAA Winter Conference Chairperson

Let the word go forth that your 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference preparations are in full swing! Conference Location and Dates locked in – Embassy Suites Lincoln, Nebraska, on the 17th and 18th of January 2022.

- Conference Theme selected – “Remembering the Past to Build on the Future.”
- Conference Speakers - lined up and speaker’s contracts sent out.
- New Conference Event - “Climbers Workshop” set up for the 18th of January.
- Conference Sponsorships being accepted - December NAA newsletter article “Conference Sponsorship Train” lists signed up sponsors but still looking for more.
- Conference Silent Auction Items – first item donated by Industrial Sales, Omaha, with more to follow. (Need everyone’s help to acquire items.)
- Conference Exhibitors – Bartlett Arborist Supply Company first exhibitor to sign up & brand new to the conference. (Need help to sign up exhibitors)
- Conference Business Meeting – time locked in, nomination requests for NAA awards and board of director’s election sent out (Fall NAA newsletter page 13 & 23)
- Conference Brochure, Exhibitors & Attendees – under development.
- Conference meals and break items – being finalized.



Embassy Suites at night

This is the last newsletter article about your association’s 2022 winter conference. A great effort is going into developing this event. Your presence and crew members’ attendance are requested to make the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference the best your association has ever had.

## SO IS THE NAA NEWSLETTER WORTH READING?

By: Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator

I have been the coordinator of the NAA newsletter for years and I have always wondered if my fellow Nebraska took the time to read their NAA’s quarterly newsletter and what they thought of the newsletter content and its usefulness. The following are remarks from a fellow Mature Certified NE Arborist, George Acker, owner & operator of A + Community Tree Care in Ogallala, NE.



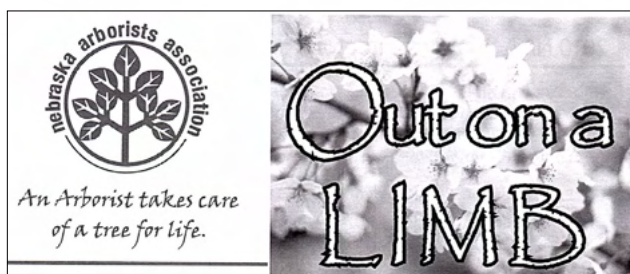
George Acker trying to stay out of trouble at the western summer field day.

George states the following: “In my files, I still have every NAA newsletter since the 3rd quarter 2011, Vol 30, # 3, the black & white print days; I often want to refer back to an article such as the description of a species worth noting or new arborists guidelines. I weekly use the new pruning guidelines released about 3 yrs. ago in printed form.... it helps folks reinforce what they were just told.

I learned more about Jeff Kennedy than ever before.... good article. I am amazed at the professional layout & think you must get some pretty good help from some sharp NAA office staff. As a newsletter, it is very well done!!”

Thank you very much, George, for your comments about the NAA newsletter. The credit for the layout and design of the newsletter goes to Kylie Schildt, graphics editor, and Andee Arnoldy, NAA Coordinator and the rest of the NAA staff who proofread the articles. My job is to write & obtain the articles. I have made a concerted effort to include more photos in the newsletter because I feel a photo will draw the reader into the article. As they say – a picture is worth a thousand words.

My goal has always been to expose the reader to the latest tree issues and other information to help them accomplish their various Arborist tasks.



B&W banner on the 3rd quarter 2011, newsletter

If you would like to send me your impressions of the NAA newsletter, please email me at [jlkeepers45@gmail.com](mailto:jlkeepers45@gmail.com). I would appreciate your comments. In addition, we could always use stories and photos from our members for the newsletter. You and your company’s support of Nebraska Arbor Day Celebration, April 29, always make great feature stories.

The next newsletter submission date is February 1, 2022.

Remember: An Arborist takes care of a tree for life.

# FEATURED GOAL OF THE 2022 GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE "REMEMBERING THE PAST TO BUILD ON THE FUTURE"

By: *Jim Keepers, Conference Chairperson*

I have established two goals for the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference. The first is to remember Arborists: Dave Mooter, Eric Berg, Orville Hatcher, Terry Hughes, Lawrence Torpy Sr., Ray Enfield, Richard (Dick) Toy, Clayton Black, Galen Olsberg, Charles Talbitzer, Neal Jennings, Roy Rasmussen, Wayne Willmeng, John Lueschen, David Wysong, Allan Enfield, Ray Svoboda, John Housley Jr. (JR) and others, who have gone before us as we build on our Arborist future.

I am asking you to spend some time while attending the 2022 event to think about those Arborists/Foresters who have gone before us and worked so hard to establish our association built on a foundation of training, knowledge, skill, and customer service. If you know of other Arborists who have passed our way and should be added to this list, please let me know before the winter conference. May all deceased Arborists rest in peace.

My second goal is to have our association honor those remaining NAA 29 Charter Members still with us who had the courage and foresight to establish our association and still guide us today as we move into the future. The following eight active or retired Charter Arborists are still with us: Dennis Adams, John Housley SR, Dave Lanoha, Jack Nebelsick, Philip Pierce, Barbara (Torpy) Von Tersch, Larry Torpy, and Steve Torpy. I hope these individuals will be present at our business meeting during the conference.



**The large branches coming out of the Crabapple tree are Apple branches and the small branches are Crabapple branches.**

## QUESTION OF THE QUARTER

*Submitted by: Jim Keepers, Maturing Certified NE arborist*

What has caused my two healthy Crabapple trees to produce apples & crabapple berries? The apples and crabapple berries are standard-sized and delicious, and the birds love them. The branches of the apple part of the tree are very different than the crabapple branches. The trees are about 12 years old, and I have gone in and pruned the apple branches out, but they just come back. When looking at the two trees, the crabapple branch leaves are turning yellow, and the berries are bright red. The apple branch leaves are still very green, and I only have two apples remaining because the wind has blown the others off the branches. My wife has picked some of the apples, and they taste like normal apples. I have not sprayed, injected, or treated the soil in any way around these two trees. The other crabapple trees I bought at the same time produce normal crabapple berries. So the question still stands, why are these two crabapple trees producing both eating apples and red berry fruit that the birds love?

If you know the reason for my tree to produce both Apples and Crabapples, please let me know the reason so I can write up the reason in the NAA March newsletter issue. This new newsletter article is open for submission by any Arborists, and I do welcome your submissions.



**Small Crabapples produced by an unusual Crabapple tree.**



**Normal Apples produced by an unusual Crabapple tree.**

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# I WOULD NEVER BELIEVE IT COULD HAPPEN!

By: Jim Keepers, Monitor for the NAA Tree ID Class

Over the years, I have had the honor and pleasure to monitor our Arborist School, “Tree Identification, Evaluation & Selection, Planting & Establishment” class. We had 15 attendees for CE credits only and 35 attendees working towards achieving their NAA Arborist Certification. Four NAA Arborist School Scholarships were also given out for this class, and the recipients were the following: Missy Ragatz, Tyler Munn, Samuel Popken, and Josh Brobst. In addition to such a large class, there was a vast difference in the attendee’s ages and experience. Our youngest attendee was a high school student.



**Class attendees listen while Justin explains the difference between a Sugar maple and a Norway maple.**

A special thanks go to Justin Evertson and Graham Herbst from the Nebraska Forest Service for their valuable time and talents to continue teaching this class for the past number of years. Again, Wayne Park in Waverly, Nebraska, was selected as the outdoor location for the course, and all indoor instruction was conducted at the Waverly VFW Hall.



**Justin instructing in the field**

Justin and Graham spent a lot of time in Wayne Park instructing the attendees on the proper methods of pruning young trees. This allows the instructors at the future “Pruning, Climbing and Safety Class” to spend more time following the proper procedures for removing large tree branches. The increased number of attendees striving to acquire their NE Arborists Certification shows your association must be doing something right to prepare future Arborists to become an NAA Certified Arborist.

Any Arborists dealing with tree issues, no matter the time of the year, must be highly skilled in their ability to tell the customer the type of tree they are examining. Our customers are now more educated in the trees on their landscape.

The next most challenging Tree ID Class will be the NAA’s winter class, and Justin is again scheduled to be the lead instructor for this class. Mark your calendar to attend this class and increase your knowledge of winter tree identification.



**Graham leading a classroom instruction**

## A LOOK BACK INTO THE NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE HISTORY

It has been only a short seven years, but can you name the individuals in this Nebraska Forest Service personnel picture taken in 2015? A number of these individuals have given their time and talents to enhance your Nebraska Arborists Association.



## DIGITAL DIAGNOSTIC NETWORK HAVE QUESTIONS? GET ANSWERS. SUBMIT PICTURES AND QUESTIONS FOR DIAGNOSIS BY NEBRASKA EXTENSION EXPERTS.

Do you or your clients have questions you need help answering? Even though you have been an Arborist for years, there are always questions you cannot answer. You can take them to your local Extension office or Digital Diagnostic Network. All Certified NE Arborists are invited to submit questions and photos through this website or ask assistance from an Extension professional at any Nebraska Extension office. All offices are equipped with high-resolution digital image capturing technology.

If the question is about a tree insect or disease problem, an expert panel of Extension Professionals will review and respond to the question. To get started, create an account so the question can be reviewed and answered via email. For more information and to create an account, go to Digital Diagnostic Network.

# THE NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM (NSA) HISTORY

By: *Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator*

The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum was founded in 1978 as a partnership between the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (a non-profit organization to create arboretums across the state where a variety of trees would be planted, tested, and enjoyed.)



It was apparent to the founders of NSA that an arboretum in Brownville would have little relevance to a person in Alliance. The result was the groundbreaking concept of a statewide arboretum. They would take the arboretum to the people, dispersed in communities across the state, making it both accessible and relevant.

Surprisingly, the word “tree” does not appear at all in our articles of incorporation. Instead, the founders used the much more expansive term “flora,” which encompasses all kinds of plants. This is appropriate because, whether in the wild or in cultivation, plants grow best in the context of other plants and plant communities—a foreshadowing of NSA’s efforts to create community both for plantings and for people.

What began as an effort of a small group of plant enthusiasts has evolved into a coalition of community builders, environmental stewards, and others who love the land. Whether it be the pristine prairies of the Sand Hills or a schoolyard in a challenging urban neighborhood, the NSA’s efforts have continually adapted to needs as they arose:

- Making native and regionally adapted plants more readily available
- Addressing the lack of outreach on sustainable landscape design and management
- Making resources available for public landscape projects at the local level

Hanna Pinneo is the new Executive Director of NSA. She was Interim Executive Director for 1 ½ years, and before that, she held the position of Environment Education Coordinator. One of her major goals is to plant more trees throughout the state of Nebraska.



**Hanna Pinneo, Executive Director of NSA**

NSA is a great tree-related organization, and I would recommend an Arborist Company or individual Arborist to become a member. I am proud to say my Arborist Company is a member of the NSA. Without their support, we wouldn’t have great speakers like Justin Evertson, Graham Herbst, Chrissy Land, and other NSA staff able and willing to assist your association with the NAA Arborist School and Summer & Winter Conferences

NFS/NSA will have a booth at our 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference, and Hanna is trying very hard to arrange her schedule to attend the conference. Take the time to stop by their booth and let them know that you appreciate their efforts and the support of the NAA as an Arborist.

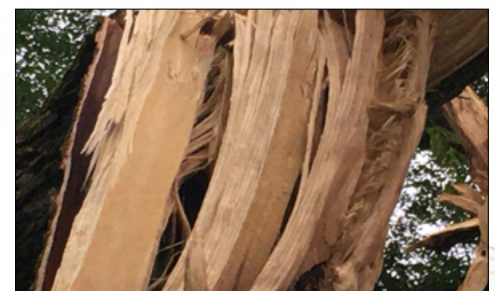
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**NEWLY CERTIFIED ARBORISTS**

Jon Forney  
Nikolaus Statz



**What has caused the wood of this tree to split**

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2. A certified Arborist agrees to follow a code of ethics for the best care trees and those who own them.
3. A certified Arborist understands how to balance the client's needs with those of the trees they are caring for.
4. A certified Arborist is an individual who networks with and learns from the best in the business.
5. A certified Arborist has acquired the skills, physical prowess, strength, intelligence, and vigilance to get the job done safely.
6. A certified Arborist makes better decisions with the treatment and removal of trees.
7. A certified Arborist has the right tools giving them the capability to take care of trees safely.
8. A certified Arborist has the required city licenses, liability insurance, and worker's comprehensive insurance.

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# WHO BROUGHT CHRISTMAS TREES TO AMERICA?

Most 19th-century Americans found Christmas trees an oddity. The first record of one being on display was in the 1830s by the German settlers of Pennsylvania, although trees had been a tradition in many German homes much earlier. The Pennsylvania German settlements had community trees as early as 1747. But, as late as the 1840s, Christmas trees were seen as pagan symbols and not accepted by most Americans.

It is not surprising that the tree was adopted so late in America, like many other festive Christmas customs. To the New England Puritans, Christmas was sacred. The pilgrim's second governor, William Bradford, wrote that he tried hard to stamp out "pagan mockery" of the observance, penalizing any frivolity. The influential Oliver Cromwell preached against "the heathen traditions" of Christmas carols, decorated trees, and any joyful expression that desecrated "that sacred event." In 1659, the General Court of Massachusetts enacted a law making any observance of December 25 (other than a church service) a penal offense; people were fined for hanging decorations. That stern solemnity continued until the 19th century, when the influx of German and Irish immigrants undermined the Puritan legacy.



**Omaha's Durham Christmas tree**

## NEW MEMBERS

**Mason Bales  
Brian Bouckhout  
Jacob Brown  
Mickey Dunn  
Josef Erickson  
Jon Forney  
Stephen Gaasch  
Joshua Grieser  
Aud Koch  
Jason McComb  
Nikolaus Statz  
Kenneth Yount**

In 1846, the popular royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were sketched in the Illustrated London News, standing with their children around a Christmas tree. Unlike the previous royal family, Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at court immediately became fashionable—not only in Britain but with fashion-conscious East Coast American Society. The Christmas tree had arrived.

By the 1890s, Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany, and Christmas tree popularity was on the rise around the U.S. It was noted that Europeans used small trees about four feet in height, while Americans liked their Christmas trees to reach from floor to ceiling.

The early 20th century saw Americans decorating their trees mainly with homemade ornaments, while the German-American sect continued to use apples, nuts, and marzipan cookies. Popcorn joined in after being dyed bright colors and interlaced with berries and nuts. Electricity brought about Christmas lights, making it possible for Christmas trees to glow for days on end. Christmas trees began to appear in town squares across the country and having a Christmas tree in the home became an American tradition.

*Article from the History Web Site October 2021*

## A FEW OBSERVATIONS FROM ANOTHER NE STORM

*By: Justin Evertson, Green Infrastructure Coordinator, NFS/NSA,*

In his internet articles dated August 25, 2020, Justin describes how no tree species are completely resistant to storm damage.

Weak branch attachments caused by included bark are by far the most significant cause of limb failure in storms. Included bark refers to a "V" shaped branch attachment that allows a crease to develop between the branch and the trunk. Storms can cause this crease to start splitting like a zipper opening, and once it starts going, lookout as the limb is coming down. A better branch attachment has a distinctive "U" shape with a clear ridgeline between the trunk and the branch. Correcting poor branching when the tree or branch is younger is critical to help trees better resist storm damage.

Photos show how two of our native trees with codominant leaders are affected by Nebraska storms.



**Close up of codominant leader tree split on Mulberry tree.**



**Hackberry split down the tree from included bark.**

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# CLIMBING IS A SKILL THAT CAN BE LEARNED

By: *Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator*

The inexperienced climber must learn how to tie and use the required knots properly, know the proper rope selection for a specific climbing task, and the safety measures to follow when working around and in a tree. The NAA's Arborist School Pruning, Climbing, and Safety class instructors strive to teach the attendees the knowledge and skill needed to start them on their journey to become safe climbers.



**Phil Pierce instructing NAA attendees how to perform an aerial rescue during the class at the Arborist School**

I have been fortunate to attend this class as a student in 2000, and as a class monitor and a documentation photographer in the following years. I have seen the class grow and develop. For years Phil Pierce, Certified NE Arborist, Consulting Arborist, and one of the original NAA 29 Charter Members, taught the original class. Jerel Converse, NAA Certified Arborist and City of Omaha Employee, and present NAA Board Treasurer, took over the class. We have a new lead trainer instructor Tom Anderson, Wright Tree Service Employee. Tom has assisted with the class instruction in previous years, and I have watched him do an outstanding job. He is very patient with the students who have never seen an Arborist knot or climbed a tree in a harness. Under the guidance of Jerel, Tom led this year's class and is in the process of taking a hard look at the schedule for future classes.



**Phil Pierce demonstrating a speed line during the class at the Arborist School**

A special thanks to assistant instructors Mike Ayers: Army Veteran and NAA Certified Arborist, and Robert Schreiner: NAA Certified Arborist and Arborist Employee at Nebraska City Utilities. Mike is a very patient and gifted instructor who enjoys working with the attendees. Robert worked with the attendees during the knot learning part of the class and then presented a very informative class instruction on the operations and use of a Bucket Truck. Michael Seuferer, Wright Tree Service, was a news class assistant instructor. During the field instructions, Dustin Nelson, NAA Certified Arborist and NAA Board Member, was a great addition to the teaching team. Ryan Worthy, Luis Segoviano (NAA Certified Arborist), and Adrian Bolter (NAA Certified Arborist) also assisted in the tree field climbing training. Before I forget, I must thank Lon Nutter, NAA Certified Arborist, for his excellent safety presentation. Safety is a key section of the NAA Arborist Certification Exam, and Lon always covers all the information to assist the attendees pass the exam. Thanks, Lon, for another great job!



**Tom Anderson demonstrates one of the many knots taught in the class.**

The location for the "Pruning, Climbing and Safety" class has changed locations over the years. I remember when it was at the Eastern 4H Center south of Gretna, but it moved to the Carol Joy Holling Center outside Ashland, NE. It is one of the best locations, I feel, to hold this type of Arborist climbing training class. It is very close to Omaha and not a far driving distance from Lincoln. We did have some attendees come from locations throughout the state of Nebraska. Another factor for having the class at the Center was the huge Oak trees suited for climbing instruction. There was a total of 56 attendees at the class, with a total of 41 students working towards their NAA Arborist Certification. It was another record attendance.

I must thank Andee Arnoldy, NAA Coordinator, for all the administrative work she has done in making the arrangements for your NAA Arborist School. Individuals like Andee work in the background, but without their efforts, your association wouldn't be able to conduct any of its training and conferences. I also want to thank Kevin Popken, NAA Certified Arborist, for his work in setting up this class.

During the second day of the class, the instructors demonstrated a speed line and the proper method of roping a large limb, cutting it off, and lowering it to the ground.

One by-product from the class at the Center, the climbers were able to demonstrate branch removal and remove the deadwood from the Oaktree, thus saving the Center a large pruning fee.

On Friday afternoon, the attendees were invited to spend time enhancing their climbing skills, and the experienced climbers were able to show off how they could move around a huge Oak tree safely and with great skill.



**Jerel Converse gives his final instruction as lead instructor during the "Pruning, Climbing & Safety" class.**

Like I said at the start of this article, I have attended numerous "Pruning, Climbing & Safety" classes, and I felt this one was one of the best. We had great weather, great instructors, and future Arborist students who wanted to learn more about the proper and safe climbing methods.

In closing, I want to thank Jerel Converse for giving his time to educate future NE Arborists and enhance the knowledge of experienced Arborist Climbers. Jerel, you have done a great job, and I know Tom will too.

NOTE TO READERS: Because of the early December Christmas publication of the NAA newsletter, the article on the Arborist School, "Plant Health Care and Tree Biology Class," will be featured in the March 2022 issue.

## NEW ARBORIST COMPANY STEPS FORWARD

*By: Jim Keepers, Coordinator NAA Newsletter*

In our very hectic business world, it is hard for a new Arborist company to establish itself the first year and at the same time build up its customer's base. It is also very unusual for a young company to step forward and accomplish a community service project in its first year.

Amy Nakai and Jeron Sundberg, co-owner of 'Rooted Tree Specialists,' are cut from a different cloth, and they gladly answer the call to help others when asked. Amy told me it was no secret Jeron and her love to help others. So when the request for assistance for a local trail community at Lake Cunningham was announced, they jumped at the opportunity. A few weekends back, they spent an entire Saturday clearing the extremely overgrown trails and removing the fallen trees out of the trail way for the upcoming G.O.A.T.z, Greater Omaha Area Trail Runners, Ultra Trail Race.

This new company wants to be part of their community and not just prune and remove trees for a living. I believe their Arborist Company is on the right path to success. Their motto is "Being rooted in the Community, for the Community and enjoy every bit of it."

In closing, I want to wish Amy and Jeron the very best with their new company, and I also want to thank them for their recent community service project.

Just a reminder, if you or your Arborist company does accomplish a community service project during 2022, please send me information on what you did, who you did it for, and the outcome. Please also send me lots of photographs.

If I have the time and you give me ample notice, I will gladly come out to the worksite and do the photo documentation of your work.



**Amy & Jeron clearing the trail**

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# DISCUSSION ABOUT INVASIVE TREE SPECIES

By: *Jim Keepers, NAA Newsletter Coordinator*

Every time I go to a tree conference, there always seems to be a discussion of ‘Invasive Trees’. Let’s take a look at what an ‘Invasive Tree’ is, but before we go down that road, let’s establish some definitions so we all know what tree we are talking about and why.



**Amur Maple tree leaves**

The following are definitions from the Federal Executive Order 13751, “Safeguarding the Nation from the Impacts of Invasive Species.” Don’t get bogged down by the definitions. Just look at a few words in each definition, and you should be able to tell the differences.

**ALIEN SPECIES** – any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species not native to that ecosystem.

**INTRODUCTION** – intentional or unintentional escape, release, dissemination, or placement of a species into an ecosystem as a result of human activity.

**INVASIVE SPECIES** – an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

**NATIVE SPECIES** – a species that historically occurred or currently occurs in that ecosystem other than as a result of an introduction.

There is always a lot of discussion about native and non-native trees. I hear people say non-native trees are invasive trees, but this is not at all true. Yes, I agree that native trees should be planted when the area is suitable for them but when you are in a bind, start looking for non-native trees. The important things to consider are planting location, tree diversity, and staying away from invasive tree species.

Let’s look at a small to medium-sized tree classified as potentially invasive, but I feel it will do just fine if planted in the correct location. The tree in question is an Amur Maple, *Acer Ginnola*. The tree will grow to about 20’ tall, and it has small double-toothed edged leaves. It has small pale-yellow flowers in the spring that produce two-winged seeds maturing in late summer. The problem with this tree is it can produce 5,000 two-winged seeds dispersed by the wind. So, you can see this can be an issue in the landscape, and why the tree can be considered invasive.



**Numerous Amur Maple seedlings germinating under the mother tree.**

I do have this tree in my back tree windbreak. The germinated seeds are a problem, but I use a weed eater, either my walk-behind model or hand-operated, to cut them down. Many of these seedlings are killed off in the winter by cold temperatures or die when mulch is applied. This tree can be planted in the landscape but remember to keep it mulched, and you will need to use your mower to cut down the seedlings that have germinated. If you want to have a tree barrier, then this tree would be ideal. That is how I have planted them at my place.

The Amur Maple is just one tree sitting on the non-invasive and invasive borderline. Other trees are causing a lot more problems and shouldn’t be planted at all. Take a look at trees that produce seeds early in their lives and those that produce quickly, germinate,

and survive. These trees will cause you a lot of problems in your landscape.

If you are not sure if the tree you will plant is considered invasive and will cause major maintenance problems, contact the NE Forest Service or the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. Another good reference source to check for invasive trees is the Arbor Day Foundation in Nebraska City.

*Information for article obtained from Arbor Day Foundation “Tree City USA Bulletin,” July/August 2020*

# TREES DON’T HEAL THEIR WOUNDS

By: *Jim Keepers: Coordinator NAA Newsletter*

The general public and some Arborists have some misconceptions when explaining how a tree takes care of a wound. Trees are not like humans and cannot heal themselves when part of the tree is damaged. A tree’s main effort is to keep decay from forming in the damaged area. So, the tree closes its wounded area by sealing or compartmentalizing the wound. The technical term for the wood being formed by the tree over the wounded area is called ‘Woundwood.’ As soon as a wound occurs on a tree, it starts the process of forming callus cells in response to wounding in the bark. So you can say a tree can create its own bandage to protect its wound.



**Sycamore tree producing ‘Woundwood’ to close a major wound.**



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# 2022 MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2022 NAA membership renewal notices were emailed in October and will be mailed to those not yet renewed in December. Membership dues must be returned to the NAA office by December 15, 2021. Each renewing certified arborist will receive a new certification card upon renewal. When recertification fees are not paid within 90 days, certification status will be forfeited. Please call the NAA office if you have any questions about your membership.

# NOMINEES BALLOT

This ballot has been prepared so that as members you may vote on the slate of officers as prepared by the Nominating Committee in accordance with the bylaws. In compliance with Articles VII, VIII and IX of the bylaws, the Nominating Committee has prepared a slate to be submitted to the membership. In further concurrence with the bylaws and as defined by Roberts Rules of Order, the slate lists one candidate per position. In an effort to allow individuals to review candidate information, below is information about the individual on the ballot. In order to move forward with the business of the association, it is imperative that you return your ballot by the time specified. Without your vote and active engagement in the business of the association, we will not be able to have an association to promote our profession. **Ballots need to be returned by January 10th.**

Board candidates will be introduced at the start of the 2022 Nebraska GREAT PLAINS Conference NAA Business Meeting. All members listed in this notice of Annual Meeting are eligible candidates and have agreed to have their names placed on the ballot. The membership will vote on candidates prior to the conference. The NAA Board will have an opening to elect a person to serve as President-Elect, and Director. Individuals elected will officially begin his/her term on January 17, 2022.



**DUSTIN NELSON (President-Elect)** Dustin Nelson is an NAA certified Arborist that has been in the Arboriculture Industry since 2010. He has worked as a climber for a few companies in the Omaha/Metro Area as well as for a smaller Company in North Carolina. He then worked for Terry Hughes Tree Service as a climbing foreman. In 2020 Dustin “branched” out and started his own company, DnTree LLC which is based out of his hometown of Weeping Water. His climbing style involves both SRS and MRS climbing techniques, but he gravitates towards climbing SRS. Dustin enjoys teaching modern techniques to those willing to learn and is always eager to share his knowledge with others. He was elected to be a NAA Board member in 2018, and has greatly enjoyed spending time at the classes and having the opportunity to share his knowledge with other climbers and other fellow tree care professionals. He has been nominated for NAA President-Elect for the new term, and hopes he can continue to serve the NAA and those who support this industry.



**TIM CROWL (Director)** Tim became a Certified NAA Arborist in 2009 and has been Owner of Crowl Tree Service for over 35 years. He has been a devoted member of the NAA and finds importance of continued education in the certification program. Tim specializes in tree line clearance, tree health diagnosis, plant health, tree maintenance, pruning, and tree removals.



## 2022 SLATE OF NOMINEES BALLOT

**YOUR VOTE MATTERS! PROXY BALLOTS MUST BE RETURNED BY 01/10/2022.**

- I accept the 2022 Slate
- I do not accept the 2022 Slate
- I abstain from voting

President-Elect.....	Dustin Nelson	NAME Required
Director .....	Tim Crowl	

**Please return your ballot by January 10, 2022 to the NAA office by mail or fax to (402) 761-2224.**



# Happy Holidays from Advanced Association Management!

**Pictured - front row, left to right: Cameryn Kremer, Megan Benes, Jennifer Eurek, Andee Arnoldy, and Raegan Mantz.**

**Back row, left to right: Kelsey Burkhardt, Kylie Schildt, Kathi Schildt, Vance, Taylor Moore, and Alyssa Brodersen.**

## CHRISTMAS TREE FUN FACTS

*Excerpt from "Choose a locally grown Christmas Tree" by Sarah Browning, Extension Educator - Nebraska City News Press*

1. Christmas trees were introduced in the United States, as part of holiday celebrations, by German settlers in the 1800s. They quickly went from small tabletop trees to large floor-to-ceiling trees.
2. The first Christmas tree farm was planted in 1901 by W.V. McGalliard, in response to the growing concern of over harvesting natural evergreen tree stands.
3. There are close to 15,000 Christmas tree farms, encompassing approximately 350,000 acres, in the United States and over 100,000 people employed either full or part time in the industry.
4. The top Christmas tree producing states are Oregon, North Carolina, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Washington.
5. For every live Christmas tree harvested, 1-3 seedlings are planted the following spring.



## OFFICE HOLIDAY HOURS

The NAA office will close for Thanksgiving on Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26. The office will close for Christmas and New Year's on Wednesday, December 23 and reopen on Monday, January 3. The Nebraska Arborists Association staff wishes all of you a happy holiday season!





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