

125th Anniversary of Arbor Day!

This year marks an historic and significant event --- the celebration of the 125th anniversary of Arbor Day! Arbor Day is a Nebraska original. The idea of setting aside a day to specifically honor and encourage the action of planting trees was begun by J. Sterling Morton of Nebraska City. His was a simple message: plant trees. To bring about the wide-spread participation, he proposed a holiday for tree planting, Arbor Day, which was first declared in 1872.

In 1882, the State Board of Agriculture accepted a resolution by Mr. Morton "to set aside one day to plant trees, both forest and fruit." The Board declared April 10 as Arbor Day and offered prizes to the counties and individuals that properly planted the largest number of trees on that day. More than one million trees were planted in Nebraska on that first Arbor Day. Shortly after the 1882 observance, other states passed legislation to observe Arbor Day each year with appropriate ceremonies. By 1920, 45 states and territorial possessions were celebrating Arbor Day. Today Arbor Day is observed in all 50 states and in many other countries. Arbor Day is now celebrated on the last Friday in April in Nebraska. This year the day is April 25.

Throughout the world, people of all ages are planting trees, caring for them, and learning their value to our environment and lives:

- In the United States, this tree planting festival is called Arbor Day.
- In Israel, it is called the New Year's Day of the Trees.
- Korea has a Tree-Loving Week.
- Iceland has a Student's Afforestation Day.
- Yugoslavia holds an Arbor Day in the spring and an Afforestation Day in the fall.
- India celebrates a National Festival of Tree Planting.

J. Sterling Morton stated the concept well when he decreed, "Arbor Day is not like other holidays. Each of those reposes on the past, while Arbor Day proposes for the future." Your participation in planting a tree or sponsoring a celebration for Arbor Day this year will be a significant way for you to show your commitment to environmental stewardship and concern for our environment. This year plant a tree, encourage your community to plant trees in a public area or help your local school sponsor an Arbor Day program for the students. Our world will be a better place for your efforts.

The next Tree Tips column will discuss the proper methods to use in planting a tree.