

Walking Arboretum showcases Lyons “forest”

The stand of tall blue spruce trees at the east end of Lyons’ Sandstone Park offers a shady hideaway in hot weather and lighted holiday cheer in the winter, but few residents who pass by know that the trees were planted as small seedlings decades ago by the town as part of the original park construction.

Thanks to a planned project by the Town of Lyons Ecology Advisory Board, the botanic features and history of the spruces and many other trees in the town will soon be available as a learning experience to residents and visitors.

The Ecology Advisory Board is in the early stages of creating a “Walking Arboretum” on town lands, said Garima Fairfax, EB member and part of the Arboretum effort.

Fairfax, Fay Marshall, Jane Kellogg, Nick Dudas, Kris Todd and Calista Morrill are members of the group spearheading the Arboretum effort, along with retired Colorado state forester Ron Gosnell.

Gosnell first conceived of the idea of an urban arboretum and found eager support from the town’s Ecology Board. (Interestingly enough, the Ecology Advisory Board originally began as the Lyons Tree Board - a volunteer group formed to meet the town’s requirements to be certified as a member of the national Tree City USA organization.)

The Walking Arboretum project began in earnest last summer as group members began identifying, mapping and entering into a database those trees that will be included in the project. The arboretum is expected to be rolled out to the public in the spring of 2016.

In the meantime, arboretum volunteers are researching notable trees in town, including unusual species, older trees and those of historical interest. Those trees on Lyons’ public streets and park lands will then be identified by small signs next to them. Maps will be generated to allow residents and visitors to walk around town and view the trees.

The idea is to educate the public on what trees are best suited for the Lyons and surrounding areas and to provide historical perspective, said Fairfax.

“There’s a wide variety of tree types growing here – some native, some introduced and it’s clear to see which ones are thriving,” said Fairfax.

Trees are valuable to Lyons; they provide fresh air and water, wildlife habitat, a shady microclimate, and enhance the beauty of the town, she said.

A key part of the Walking Arboretum will be public involvement.

“There’ll be a fund that people can contribute to for buying more trees and maintaining the existing trees,” said Fairfax. “Residents and businesses will be able to buy a tree to add to our Walking Arboretum, and to choose the type of tree from our list of trees that will thrive here in our unique native setting.”

The money raised will allow new types of trees to be added to replace those lost to threats like the emerald ash borer or to replace trees lost in the 2013 flood. New trees will be planted in Lyons’

parks and along public streets. Volunteers and town agencies will work together to ensure the survival of any newly planted trees.

Any resident who has knowledge of an unusual, historically significant or especially unique tree can contact the Ecology Board at: ecology@townoflyons.com.

Greg Lowell
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