

Yesterday tree lovers across the State of Nebraska celebrated Arbor Day. Arbor Day is observed in all fifty states and in many is celebrated on the same day as Nebraska's. However, it's not the same for all fifty. Some states observe Arbor Day on dates more closely based on the best tree-planting times in their areas.

Since childhood, rarely, if ever, have I missed planting a tree or trees on Arbor Day. I vividly remember planting trees on Arbor Day with Mother. Perhaps that explains my love for trees. Over the years I've either planted trees in my home landscape or assisted with plantings on public grounds. Yesterday, I actively shared in Minden's Arbor Day celebration working alongside members of the Minden Tree Board and other volunteers. Collectively, (if weather permitted) we planted thirty 'Taylor' junipers in an area at the Minden Cemetery, a variety of tree most worthy for a future column, but not today.

How about you? Did you get a chance to celebrate Arbor Day by planting a tree? Perhaps you didn't because the opportunity didn't lend itself or perhaps you've been meaning to do so but just can't make up your mind what to plant? If so, I have good news. There is still plenty of time to plant trees, and I have a suggestion as to one particular tree you might consider planting.

This year on Arbor Day I planted only public trees. Last year I participated in public plantings, but Rita and I also planted in our home landscape. Arbor Day, 2014, fell on April 25. Two days earlier, on the 23rd, I purchased a small ornamental tree for the yard. This particular species had recently been developed as a hybrid magnolia, touting great potential. It was created by crossing *Magnolia acuminata* 'Fertile' and *Magnolia endata* 'Sawada's Cream'. This offspring is called *Magnolia* x '*Butterflies*'.



For three reasons I chose this particular tree. First, I absolutely love magnolia trees; secondly, it is a small tree; and thirdly, it blooms yellow. '*Butterflies*' is an ornamental tree designed for smaller landscapes and mixed borders. Over the years, Rita and I have planted innumerable trees on our property, and the fact is, we're running out of space.

Interestingly, when I researched the tree's name, I discovered it acquired the name '*Butterflies*' because when in bloom, its flowers supposedly resemble butterflies in flight. That might be stretching it somewhat, but I can assure you, this year, when our '*Butterflies*' first bloomed, Rita and I were astonished at its dazzling, buttery beauty. With great expectations, we now await each new spring as this little tree gains in size and splendor.

Another spectacular feature of this tree is it is rated for Zone 4 through 9. As stated earlier, I love magnolias. Unfortunately, the saucer magnolia and star magnolia we have growing in our yard are only rated Zone 5. They are not as hardy, thus more susceptible to frost damage. With *'Butterflies'* being rated hardy to Zone 4, it is better protected from the cold.

'Butterflies' magnolia is a deciduous tree. At maturity, it grows between ten and twenty feet tall with a similar spread. Its bold, green leaves develop after it blooms, turning an orange/red in the fall. The tulip-like, bright yellow flowers are three to five inches across. The flowers have a soft, sweet scent which lures bees and real butterflies to partake of its sweet sustenance. This tree has an upright, pyramidal growth habit. *'Butterflies'* has a relatively small and simple



lateral root network allowing for annuals, perennials and groundcovers to be underplanted. It prefers sun to part shade. This particular magnolia is adaptable to urban pollution as well as being cold and heat tolerant. It prefers a moist, well-drained, organic soil. It is suggested to plant the tree in a location that protects its flowers from the ravages of wind.

Arbor Day is officially over for 2015; however, there is still ample time to plant trees. *'Butterflies'* is one great choice, but don't stop there.