

## **The Best Way to Remove Problem Trees**

**By Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator**

Seedling trees come up in the oddest places, and in some cases, totally unnoticed. In the neighborhood I drive through, I observed a mulberry tree growing up through a shrub rose. The mulberry thrived, gradually completely shading out the rose. Eventually the rose owner noticed the mulberry and tried to remove it, resulting in the loss of both plants. The key lesson here, other than mulberries being aggressive growers, is that by simply taking note of what is going on in the landscape and taking action while problem plants are young, time and effort is saved later.

Tree seeds have multiple ways of dispersing—wind and birds being the most common. Mulberry, boxelder, ash, silver maple, cedar and Siberian elm are often the worst culprits, producing a huge number of seeds and sowing themselves into cracks, finding a place amidst desired plants and insinuating themselves in the tiniest patch of bare earth. The flying saucer-shaped seeds of Siberian elm and the winged seeds of silver maple are excellent mechanisms for wafting into new places. The seeds of mulberry and cedar are a favorite food of birds, with the seeds moving unscathed through their digestive tract. Wherever birds roost, droppings are deposited along with a healthy dose of fertilizer to get the seedlings off to a good start.

Seedling trees that come up in lawns are easily managed just by the act of mowing, killing them at a vulnerable size. Shrub and flower borders, vegetable gardens and containers aren't mowed so require diligence on our part to keep volunteer trees from becoming monsters. Approaching this task is easier when trees are small, making the chainsaw and loppers unnecessary, especially when complete removal consists of pulling out seedlings between the thumb and forefinger. Larger trees that have been cut down, only to re-sprout, have enough sugars stored in their root system to make removal by pruning alone unlikely. When digging out problem trees is not a possibility, drilling multiple holes into the stump and applying a herbicide is a simple way to address problem trees.

If your own financial circumstances allow for the hiring of landscape management professionals, then having eyes on the landscape isn't going to be a problem. Lacking a professional landscaper, monitoring what is going on in the landscape is the next best thing to address potential issues before they become real problems.

**Nebraska Extension Master Gardeners can answer your gardening and plant questions! The horticulture helpline is available for questions from the public at these dates and times:**

**Mondays, 9 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Washington County Extension, 402.426.9455**

**Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Cuming County Extension, 402.372.6006**

**Wednesdays and Fridays, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Dodge County Extension, 402.727.2775**