



While Yankton has had the "Tree City USA" designation for 30 years, now entrance signs along East Highway 50 and the Discovery Bridge remind of our tree heritage.

PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

## Forester Works To Maintain Yankton's Tree Legacy

BY BRENDA K JOHNSON  
P&D Correspondent

Trees have been a landscaping priority for Yankton Parks & Recreation for more than thirty years. "Now the "Tree City USA" signs show it, entering the city along east Highway 50 and crossing the Missouri into Yankton on the Discovery Bridge. Lisa Kortan, Urban Forester for the City of Yankton, and South Dakota Department of Transportation made it happen.

"This will be the 31st year for Yankton meeting the criteria [of tree of tree planting and care]." She gives a nod to past city urban forester Stan Hoffart who established the effort.

Kortan's tree projects this past season added more native trees and hardy cultivars as well as replaced some drought damaged trees. She comments on last season's tree and associated native grass projects around Yankton.

### ROTARY NATURE PARK

Northwestern Public Service's Huron office notified officials of Freeman, Mitchell, and Yankton that each were selected for \$5,000 grants to purchase native trees, according to Kortan. "We're re-designing plantings at Rotary Nature Park with native trees."

Kortan aims for tree diversity. "We planted Quaking aspen, Burr oaks, Black Hills spruce, and a few more hackberries this fall," she said. "Some hackberries are already along the trail." Twenty-eight native trees were purchased locally and from area greenhouses.

"Northwest employees from the Yankton office helped plant the trees. They will be watered until the ground freezes," she said. "These trees have about 1.5 inch diameter trunks. I'm not going to stake them this winter. I won't stake them until next summer if needed. You want the root system to move a bit and stabilize the tree. In wet snow earlier, these trees leaned over, but when the snow melted, they popped back up." She added that larger diameter trees or large trees planted with a tree spade or grown in a small container might need staking because the tree is top heavy before extra root growth.

The Auld-Brokaw Trail winds through Rotary Nature Park along Marne Creek. Established plants for the park need to have low water needs due to lack of a tap for irrigation water. A buffalo grass lawn has been growing for two years and 20 ft. x 8 ft. pods of wild flowers with fieldstone boundaries are planned for this park. "Possibly we'll have labels on



"Hot Wings" maple is one the new trees in the Yankton Arboretum. As well as autumn leaf color, earlier "Hot Wings" has bright red seed clusters appear as if blooms from a distance.

PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

the wildflowers," she said.

Access to stands of native grass and labeled perennials at Paddle Wheel Point and Rotary Park are short walks from the Yankton Area Visitor Center parking lot, she mentioned for plant enthusiasts.

### YANKTON ARBORETUM

"We lost seven arboretum trees in 2012," Kortan said. "Now that we know the drought happened, it could happen again. I'll be replacing them with hardy, drought-tolerant varieties. Stan Hoffart, the past city arborist, did a nice job establishing the arboretum. Because Yankton is borderline USDA Zone 4-5a, with the weather, some trees were under stress. We want to diversify what's there as a learning site. Replacement trees for the arboretum included Matador Maple, Hot Wings Maple and Redleaf May Day Tree."

Adjacent to the arboretum and south of Yankton High School, the arboretum trail winds through established bluestem and wildflowers. "This area has filled in well," she said. It's a kind of drainage bowl. Two years ago we burned the native grass and will again in winter. It helps get rid of the elm sprouts and thicken the grasses. Burning is better on the elm sprouts than using herbicide. Larry Nichols of the Yankton Fire Department and some volunteers help with that controlled burn before spring.

Burn occurs while the grasses are still dormant, so they are unharmed. Elemental

carbon from the burn nourishes the native grasses when they begin growing later in the season.

### TREES AND DROUGHT OF 2012

Severe drought of 2012 emphasized water needs of trees until they are established. Kortan aims to provide an inch of water per week for city trees less than five years old. Even with consistent watering, some tree loss was expected with city-managed trees during the drought that eased last season. "I was surprised that we didn't lose more trees," Kortan said.

"I noticed homeowners in town and surrounding area lost pine and blue spruce. Blue spruce isn't a native tree like the Black Hills spruce. I removed about a dozen evergreens and continue to lose three or four larger elms. We planted more trees than we removed, and it was about the same as in past years. We did lose some five-seven year old maples. I think we may continue to see effects from the drought next season."

She plans to continue the watering plan and is assisted by Kris Ford, a Yankton elementary teacher who works for the city in summer. Trees in parks, green areas such as near the granite fountain at Fourth St. and Broadway Ave. and diagonally across the avenue, and trees in medians on North Broadway are examples of trees that receive city care. Kortan continues a city tree inventory to better manage the trees.

### YANKTON TREE INVENTORY

Kortan recalls the weather events that destroyed trees last spring in Sioux Falls and early fall in Rapid City. She continues to inventory public space trees in the city of Yankton. "We record information about trees by age, height, variety, and location," she said.

"We can apply for grants to help replace damaged trees if we have documentation. I use an aerial view of the city to help with a hand held GPS system to record the information." Kortan, member of the SD Forestry Council in Pierre, had help from its committee to complete the inventory of park trees in Yankton and continues to work on right-of-way trees as possible. Now with the tree inventory, Kortan will have tree information at hand to maintain the tree city legacy.

## Gardening Help: Is Your Seed Still Good?

BROOKINGS — Each spring Master Gardeners across South Dakota receive phone calls from gardeners asking if their seed is still good. Mary Roduner, SDSU Extension Horticulture Field Specialist says that in most cases, if the seed was stored properly, it is good to use.

"Many seeds can be used for several years if stored properly," Roduner said.

To ensure your seed is viable, Roduner encourages gardeners to do a germination test. To do this test, you will need paper towels, plastic zip top bags and a marker.

For each seed variety Roduner said to dampen one or two sheets of paper towel.

"Be sure it is just damp and not wet," she said. "If the towel is too wet the seeds may mold or rot before they have a chance to germinate."

Put 10 to 20 seeds on the towel and fold like an envelope or roll and fold the sides over. Put into the zip top bag, write the variety on the outside of the bag and place in a dark warm place.

"Germination times vary by seed types. What you are looking for in this test is the root emerging from the seed showing it is viable and will grow," she said.

Roduner explains that this is different from the seedling emerging from the soil and takes several days less. With this in mind, she said to start checking the seeds within two days and after that every day. Once the seeds begin to germinate, the majority will have root emergence within a week.

Once the percentage of germinated seeds is figured, Roduner said gardeners can then decide how many seeds they will need to plant. For starting seedlings indoors like cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes and peppers, etc. this may mean putting two seeds in each cell and using a small scissors to nip off any extra plants. Beans, peas, corn and other plants direct seeded in the ground can be planted a bit thicker than normal and thin the extra seedlings as normally done.

"To explain how well this works, I personally have a large amount of leftover cucumber seed that had been purchased in bulk for a project in 2006. The storage history is spotty at best with the seed being stored at room temperature in a bag for several years before being stored properly starting about year four. For the 2013 growing season I did this germination test on about 40 seeds. Every seed germinated. This proved the seed was still viable and there was no need to spend money on new seed," she explained.

To further explain how to evaluate germination, Roduner asks readers to review photos of cucumber and nasturtium seeds.

"Looking at the photos, the cucumber seed had root emergence in two days while the nasturtium seed needed five days. As the seed gets older, seed energy goes down and the germination rate also goes down. This is because even though the seed is dormant, it is using tiny amounts of stored energy. Once the stored energy goes below the critical level for an individual variety, the seed will germinate very slowly taking days longer than fresh seed and the plant will be less vigorous and produce less," she said.

Rosemary seed is a good example of short term viability. "Seed that has not been treated to improve germination has a normal germination rate of 5 percent," Roduner said. "Seed that has been pretreated has a germination rate of approximately 90 percent for six months."

After that, Roduner said the viability of the seed goes downhill very rapidly.

"At the opposite end of this, wheat seed stored in the cool dry environment of the Egyptian pyramids has germinated after 3,000 years. Each type of seed has its own length of viability that determines how long it will store," she said.

So, before throwing out that seed, thinking it may be old, do a germination check and Roduner said you may be pleasantly surprised to find it is still good.

For instructions on proper seed storage, view this link at iGrow.org <http://igrow.org/gardens/gardening/saving-garden-seed/>. It includes a chart with the longevity of many popular garden seeds.

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MARY RODUNER

## Master Gardener Training Begins April 21

BROOKINGS — Master Gardener training classes for 2014 have been scheduled.

"Lessons will be a hybrid training in two parts with the first part a series of eight weeks of on online lessons. The second part is four days of in-person hands on training," said Mary Roduner, SDSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Field Specialist.

The application deadline is April 11 as online lessons begin April 21, 2014. Trainees will be able to study on their own schedule where ever and whenever they have internet access.

A new set of lessons will be posted each week and remain available through the entire class.

"Trainees taking the hybrid class in 2013 stated they liked the freedom to study at their own pace and on their own time," Roduner said.

Class topics include; basic botany, soils, turf, trees, insects, fruit, vegetables, ornamentals and weeds. All lessons are taught by SDSU faculty and SDSU Extension staff.

The hands-on portion will be held in four locations: Sioux Falls, Huron, Mission and Spearfish beginning the third week of June.

Trainees will learn skills in pruning, plant and insect identification, turf problems, weeds, soils and ornamental plants by doing hands on exercises.

More about Master Gardeners Master Gardeners work in their community to promote and teach gardening. Opportunities include; writing articles, giving talks, working at fair booths, helping in community and school gardens, teaching and answering garden questions.

"This training gives a well-rounded education preparing

them to help their communities," Roduner said.

In 2013 Master Gardeners contributed almost 10,000 hours, worth more than \$160,000 to our communities.

There is a fee for the training, with 50 hours of volunteer payback during the first two years after training. To register visit, <http://igrow.org/events/2014-master-gardener-training/>. Applications and payment must be received no later than April 11, 2014.

For further information, application forms and schedules contact Mary Roduner, SDSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Field Specialist at [mary.roduner@sdstate.edu](mailto:mary.roduner@sdstate.edu) or 605-394-1722.

To learn more about Master Gardeners, visit <http://hortmg.sdstate.edu>.

PRESS&DAKOTAN

# 2014 Beautiful Baby Contest

We will be featuring our annual "Beautiful Baby Contest" in print and online on **Wednesday, February 26, 2014.** If you or someone you know has a child we would love to include them in our feature!

To enter, simply submit your photo and entry form with a \$10 submission fee by **Monday, February 17.**

First place winners in the following categories will receive a framed winners print and prize.

1) Newborn-6 Months    4) 25 Months-4 Years  
2) 7-12 Months        5) Multiple Births  
3) 13-24 Months

Submit Entry To:  
Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan  
319 Walnut Street, Yankton, SD 57078

**Entry Deadline:  
Mon., Feb. 17, 2014**

Category # \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parents Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Winners will be selected by the staff of Yankton Media Inc. Employees and family members of Yankton Media Inc. are ineligible to win.  
\*Submission of this form authorizes the publication of child's photo in this contest in print and online at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).  
Submission fee (\$10) must accompany entry form to be valid.