

WYOMING

Wyoming State Forestry Division

A handful of common species in many communities are often over planted, limiting diversity. Inventories completed in Wyoming cities and towns have revealed that as few as three genera comprise over 75 percent of the public trees. The most dominant species include ash, spruce, and cottonwood, in which insect and disease outbreaks have taken their toll. Landscape designers and nurseries often promote species based primarily on ornamental characteristics only rather than adaptability and hardiness. Local species guides and arboretums have now been developed to highlight a greater diversity of species.

The topography of Wyoming varies from short grass prairie to alpine forests, it ranks second highest in the U.S. for average elevation, and it has plant hardiness zones ranging from 3a to 5b. Elevation of cities and towns range from 3,600 feet to over 8,000 feet. This wide range in climate and elevation creates a wide variation in tree species that thrive in Wyoming's communities.

In a continued effort to diversify tree species in urban areas, local species selection guides have been published in 15 communities. In addition, community arboretums have been established in six communities, each representing a different climate regime. Each site contains between 50 and 150 trees with the number of species ranging from 15 to 40. The diversity effort includes restoration of a 63-acre portion of a former USDA Horticultural Research Station located west of Cheyenne which is in the process of being developed into a regional arboretum. From the 1930s until the end of the research in 1974, trials were conducted on over 2,000 varieties of woody plants.

The first community arboretum was established in Sheridan's Kendrick Park. The arboretum is next to the historic Kendrick Mansion, the residence of a former early Wyoming governor. As a bonus, the arboretum features an amazing view of the Big Horn Mountains. The same year as the establishment of Kendrick Arboretum, a second arboretum was planted in Newcastle, in the Black Hills of Wyoming. Grant funding for this arboretum has been leveraged with considerable corporate contributions to install a winding pathway through the site.

The largest of the new arboretums is in Rock Springs, Wyoming. The High Desert Arboretum is home to over 140 drought tolerant trees, representing 40 varieties. A modern solar powered drip irrigation system is a unique feature of this site. The smallest arboretum is located on school grounds in Etna, Wyoming and is used by students and teachers for educational purposes.



The Powell Arboretum has a professional weather station on the site. Photo Credit: Mark Hughes

The final arboretum is in the city of Powell, near Yellowstone National Park. It is located in a park dedicated by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935. In addition to over 30 different tree species, the arboretum features a state of the art weather station to gather climate data at the site.

Entrance signs and individual species interpretive signs have been installed in the arboretums. A website will be developed to share updates and the adaptability of the species within the sites.

The arboretums are living educational tools for natural resource managers, citizens, schools, nurseries and landscapers, arborists and others. The ultimate result will be a much greater diversity of climate hardy and disease resistant species for urban areas.



Locally produced tree guides feature tree species unique to the local area. Photo Credit: Mark Hughes



Durable interpretive signs highlight special features of individual species. Photo Credit: Mark Hughes

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Wyoming State Forestry Division
Community Forestry Program
<https://wsfd.wyo.gov/forestry-assistance-programs/community-forestry>