



Fall, 2012; Vol. 2, No.4

## Eugene-Springfield's Own Flaming Fall Foliage Festival

By Whitey Lueck

I had the pleasure of spending the single-digit years of my youth among the verdant, forest-covered mountains of northern Pennsylvania where, every fall, over a period of only a few weeks, the forests underwent an amazing transformation from the deep green of summer, to a spectacular mix of yellow, orange, red, and purple.

(Did you know that Pennsylvania means “Penn’s Woods,” after its Quaker founder, William Penn and the Latin word for “forest”? The state was almost entirely covered by forest when Penn arrived in the late 1600s, and nearly 70% of the state is still forested!)

As lovely as the fall foliage was around Jersey Shore, the town where we lived, my family had a tradition of driving in mid-October to another small town about an hour away called Renovo, to attend that community’s annual Flaming Foliage Festival. There, we sat outside on folding chairs on a sloping lawn, with the multi-colored mountains all around us, as the year’s Flaming Foliage Queen and her court proceeded from behind the seated crowd to a small stage at the base of the slope. A brief ceremony took place during which the new queen was crowned by the previous fall’s queen. Afterward, everyone applauded and we moved on to the other activities associated with the festival—including a drive into the surrounding mountains to ooo and ahh over the pretty colors.

I recall every year this early fascination with fall, when Eugene-Springfield’s urban forest—in which I’ve lived now for most of my adult life—undergoes the same wonderful transformation. However, because we have a marine-influenced climate here in western Oregon, our falls, like our springs, are much longer than those in areas like Pennsylvania that have more continental climates. So instead of lasting only a few weeks, fall here extends from late September—when the katsuras, native to Japan, turn a pale yellow—to around Thanksgiving, when the foliage of Calvary pears and Lavalle hawthorns becomes fiery red.



This young white ash is located in Eugene where the Amazon bike path intersects East 24th Avenue.

Whitey Lueck

Perhaps the most stunning display in our area occurs most years during the first two weeks of October when local ash trees don their fall finery. Although our native Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*) can produce lovely, though relatively subdued hues ranging from pale yellow to almost orange, it is the cultivated, non-native ash species that garner the most attention in our urban forest.

Green ash (*F. pensylvanica*) and white ash (*F. americana*) are the first two species to brighten our autumn days. Green ash is a medium-size tree native east of the Rockies that turns a brilliant yellow—in some years as early as the last week of September. In Eugene, showy plantings of green ash include the 600 block of Monroe Street and the section of Agate Street just north of Franklin Boulevard that leads to the Riverfront Research Park.

White ash—also native to the Midwest and the East—

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# Director's Corner



What a beautiful fall it's been! My family and I enjoyed a pretty day on the first Saturday of October while canoeing down the Willamette River

through Eugene. Although we were picking up garbage as part of the Great Willamette Cleanup, I felt lucky to be there on the river with my family. The water shimmered in the warm fall sunshine as volunteers on the shore and in boats helped with the cleanup.

This past summer, Friends of Trees continued taking new steps, launching the Eugene Summer Inspector program. Summer Inspector volunteers check on trees twice during the dry season of the trees' first year to help ensure that the tree is watered, weeded, and mulched, and they leave a door hanger at each home with a report card for the new tree owner and advice about tree care. The program will also train volunteers to monitor FOT trees through time. The Summer Inspector role is really a pleasure, walking a route of 30 trees twice during the summer, talking to neighbors about trees, and leaving information about tree care. Friends of Trees volunteers also helped Jefferson Westside

Neighbors and City of Eugene update the tree inventory for Jefferson Westside Neighborhood. I had a blast in this program, getting to know trees better by measuring them, and walking outside on nice summer days.

In September, Jim Gersbach and Kris Day from Portland gave two talks about "trees for tomorrow's urban forest," and a monitoring program for trees that Portland and FOT are piloting. It was exciting to learn more about trees that might be resilient in our changing future climate. Our Eugene chapter is now using the approach piloted in Portland to monitor the trees we plant. We will be reporting on the data we collect over the next few years. This season we will be planting drought-tolerant trees widely grown as street trees in California and monitoring their success. Please send us your feedback about which trees you think are good candidates for tomorrow's urban forest.

This fall FOT launched our online tree ordering system for Eugene and Springfield. It is now possible to order a street tree online from FOT in both Eugene and Springfield. (See page four for details.)

On November 29th, FOT will have our second annual crew leader training. Building a core of skilled crew leaders increases FOT's capacity to

do more good work for the health of Eugene-Springfield's urban forest.

I am very grateful for the continued support FOT has received from REI's Eugene store. This year Friends of Trees received a \$10,000 grant from REI to support our work in local parks and natural areas. Generous grant support was also received from the Alice C. Tyler Perpetual Trust, Meyer Memorial Trust, Union Pacific Foundation, J. Frank Schmidt Family Charitable Foundation, and Northwest Natural. I am so grateful for all the contributions from local individuals and businesses. Your support makes it possible for Friends of Trees to develop our local chapter so it can do even more work for Eugene-Springfield's urban forest.

I'm excited about FOT's first planting of the season on October 27th in Willamalane's Rob Adams Park. This interesting park location connects to a trail in Springfield's southeast hills. Volunteers will plant another 250 trees in addition to 250 trees planted last year. This first event kicks off another great Friends of Trees season of events. Enjoy the fall color. I hope to see you at a planting!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erik Burke".

Erik Burke  
Friends of Trees, Eugene Director

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can eventually grow a bit larger than green ash, but has been planted in our area only since the early 1990s, so few trees have attained any real stature yet. (An exception is the remarkable three-trunked white ash on the University of Oregon campus, south of Deady Hall, which is by far the oldest white ash in the area.) In the wild, white ashes—depending on the individual—can range in fall color from bright yellow to almost purple. Most of the white ash cultivars (*cultivated varieties*) we now plant, such as ‘Autumn Purple’ and ‘Autumn Applause,’ have simply stunning fall color that includes red or purple as well as orange and yellow all in the same tree!

The third cultivated ash, and the last to color up, is Mediterranean ash (*F. oxycarpa*), sometimes called Caucasian ash. It is the smallest of these three species, but can still attain 40 or more feet, especially when planted on the rich river loams found throughout much of the Eugene-Springfield area. This species also has the narrowest leaflets of the three ashes, creating a more finely-textured canopy than either green or white ashes. The fall color of the most commonly planted cultivar of this ash called ‘Raywood’ ranges from burgundy on the outer part of the canopy to pale yellow in the interior.

All ashes are dioecious. That is, they bear unisexual flowers on separate trees. So an entire tree is either male (pollen-bearing) or female (seed-bearing). And since seeds are considered “messy” by so many people these days—and can also in some cases germinate and create a “weed problem”—every cultivar of the above three ash species is male. Or, if it is female, the seeds it produces are apparently sterile.

Ashes have pinnately compound leaves, with a central axis off of which leaflets occur in pairs, as well as a terminal



Whitey Lueck

Green ashes along the entry road to Eugene's Riverfont Research Park.

leaflet. The leaves are arranged opposite one another along the twig. The number of leaflets per leaf generally ranges from five to seven, depending on the species.

Because wild ashes of these three species can vary considerably in their habit (the direction the branches grow) as well as form (the overall shape or silhouette of the tree), cultivars have been selected for superior habit and form as well as their fall color.

Fall would be amazing enough if our community were planted only with ashes. But we “celebrate diversity” around here, so there are still many more colorful deciduous trees to ogle, even after the ashes have dropped their leaves.

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Whitey Lueck is a horticulturist and naturalist, and an instructor with the University of Oregon's Department of Landscape Architecture.

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## Plant a tree with FOT— Sign up Online

It is now possible to sign up online to plant a tree with FOT in Eugene and Springfield. Start at <https://friendsoftrees.org/plant-it-programs> to determine eligibility and start the process of ordering a tree.

Between November 2011 and April 2012, we planted more than 5,200 street and yard trees in Portland, Beaverton, Vancouver and Eugene! Planting with Friends of Trees is a fun and inexpensive way to bring your neighbors together to make your neighborhood greener.

Check our online calendar to find your neighborhood's planting date for the 2012-13 season. If there is a planting in your neighborhood, you can order a tree for your home. Signing up doesn't obligate you to buy. It makes it possible for a city forester to inspect your planting strip for a location where a tree can be planted. After the inspection, we'll send you a list of recommended trees.

For just \$15 to \$55, you'll receive an 8-to 12-foot-tall tree, delivery, help with hole digging, planting assistance, mulch, stakes, and follow-up maintenance checks: a \$150 value. We also offer scholarships to people who can't afford a tree. Yard trees are also available.

## Mark Your Calendars!

Join us for these events  
in the 2012-2013 season.

**October 27, 2012—Rob Adams Park  
Planting**, Springfield, 250 natural  
area trees.

**November 29, 2012, 6-8:30pm—  
Crew leader training.**

**December 1, 2012—South Eugene  
Neighborhood Tree Planting**, Street  
and Yard trees.

**January 19, 2013—North Eugene  
Neighborhood Tree Planting**, Street  
and Yard trees.

**January 21, 2013—MLK day of Service ivy pull and planting**, Eastgate  
Woodlands

**February 9, 2013—South Eugene  
Neighborhood Tree Planting 2**, Street  
and Yard trees.

**March 2, 2013—Springfield Street  
and Yard Tree Planting**

**April 6, 2013—West Eugene and  
industrial areas planting.**

**June 1, 2013—Summer Inspector  
Training**

All plantings are Saturdays from 9am-1pm. For details and more events see our web calendar at: <http://www.friendsoftrees.org/plant/calendars/eugene-springfield>, or contact us at 541-915-1601, or [erikb@FriendsOfTrees.org](mailto:erikb@FriendsOfTrees.org).