

# Durango Tree Guide



**A Tree Care Book, Written by Kids for Kids**

Sponsored by the Durango Parks and Recreation Department  
in cooperation with the Colorado State Forest Service  
and Durango School District 9-R

## Forward

This tree care booklet was derived from a brainstorming session between the Director of Parks and Recreation and District Forester of the Colorado State Forest Service. This booklet became a reality through funds being available through a Colorado Tree Coalition Grant.

We first prepared an outline on how this tree care booklet should be written, and then selected an adult advisory committee made up of authors, school teachers, a newspaper editor, and tree experts. This group was so creative, that at our first meeting it was decided to discard the outline and allow the kids to do what they do best. Before we involved the youth of Durango, this Board met twice to determine the chapters. At that point, we got the youth involved with writing, art, researching and learning about trees.. They were very creative and excited about this booklet, and that is why we feel our tree care booklet came out so well. We applaud their work.

Each child that worked on this book received a t-shirt, a seedling tree and was introduced at their school's assembly. They were also given special recognition awards during a Durango City Council meeting. All adult advisors received a plaque at this same meeting.

We printed 1500 copies of this booklet and they are being distributed throughout the community. This booklet is an excellent example of what can happen when three entities work together.

**Cover Artist:**  
**Laurie Dawn Alexander, age 15**

## Introduction

Trees remind us of the home we left behind. Certainly the people who settled Durango thought so. They missed the shade and the comfort of having trees around them. Maybe they even looked upon trees as companions and yearned to have an apple or a peach.

The valley along the banks of the Animas where the town would grow did not remind them of their old homes. Alfred P. Camp visited the site in September 1880 and described it as “covered with sagebrush sunflowers and some lofty pine trees.”

The Camps and others set about planting trees and that is one of the heritages these pioneers left for us today. Durango would not be a “Tree City U.S.A.” If it would have not been for their concern and interest in turning this sagebrush valley into what has become an urban forest.

Think about that as you walk through Durango and thank those pioneers for beautifying Durango. We are stewards of that wonderful gift. Let us do our best to pass this heritage on to future generations.

Duane Smith  
Professor of History  
Fort Lewis College



Art by:  
Hakim Reddy,  
age 12

## Student Contributors who made this Guide possible:

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Trees Are Better Than Trolleys  
by Megan Hoch

As you drive down East Third Avenue, you may notice a variety of trees lined up on the median that stretches for blocks and blocks. But have you ever stopped to wonder where these trees came from, or how long they have been there? You may have wondered what East Third looked like without any trees.

As early as 1889, the trees were planted on the median by the city of Durango and later by the Ladies Improvement Society. The minutes of the city council Oct. 1, 1889, read: City Engineer instructed to expend 150 dollars for planting trees on the Boulevard (Third Avenue).

Around the turn of the century, the city decided to remove the trees and place a trolley in the median. When the ladies of the Improvement Society learned of this, they immediately refused to let the city of Durango cut down the trees. The story goes that the ladies chained themselves to the trees! After numerous attempts to cut down the trees, the city finally gave up. The end result was that the trolley was placed on Main Avenue instead.

The ladies continued to plant more trees along Third. One tree was planted on the 1000 block in honor of Ella Birkhimer by her family. Ella ran a hat shop and was very civic minded. The plaque (and a new tree) are in her honor.

Thanks to these ladies, Third is still a wide, lovely boulevard as originally planned. The trolley only lasted a few years. The ladies seemed to be quite aware that trees are better than trolleys.

## Chapter One: Third Avenue Walking Tree Tour

To find where each number on the tour is located, please see the map on pages 12 and 13.

1. We begin our tree walk on 1501 East Third Avenue with a big, old apricot tree. Look just inside the iron fence to the left to see this large tree. It's lovely and provides fruit for jams and jellies, but if the owner doesn't hurry and pick the fruit in late August, the sidewalk turns a squishy orange!



Art by:  
Matt Clark,  
age 12

2. Next on the walk are the numerous Blue Spruce. Obviously some families in the early 1900's thought these would be nice near their houses. Little did they realize these small trees would grow into the giant trees that block sunlight and dwarf the homes today.



PONDEROSA  
PINE

Art by:  
Andrew  
Fisher,  
age 12

3. The large Weeping Birch in the yard of 1412 E. Third Ave goes nicely with the arches of the home and matches the white exterior.

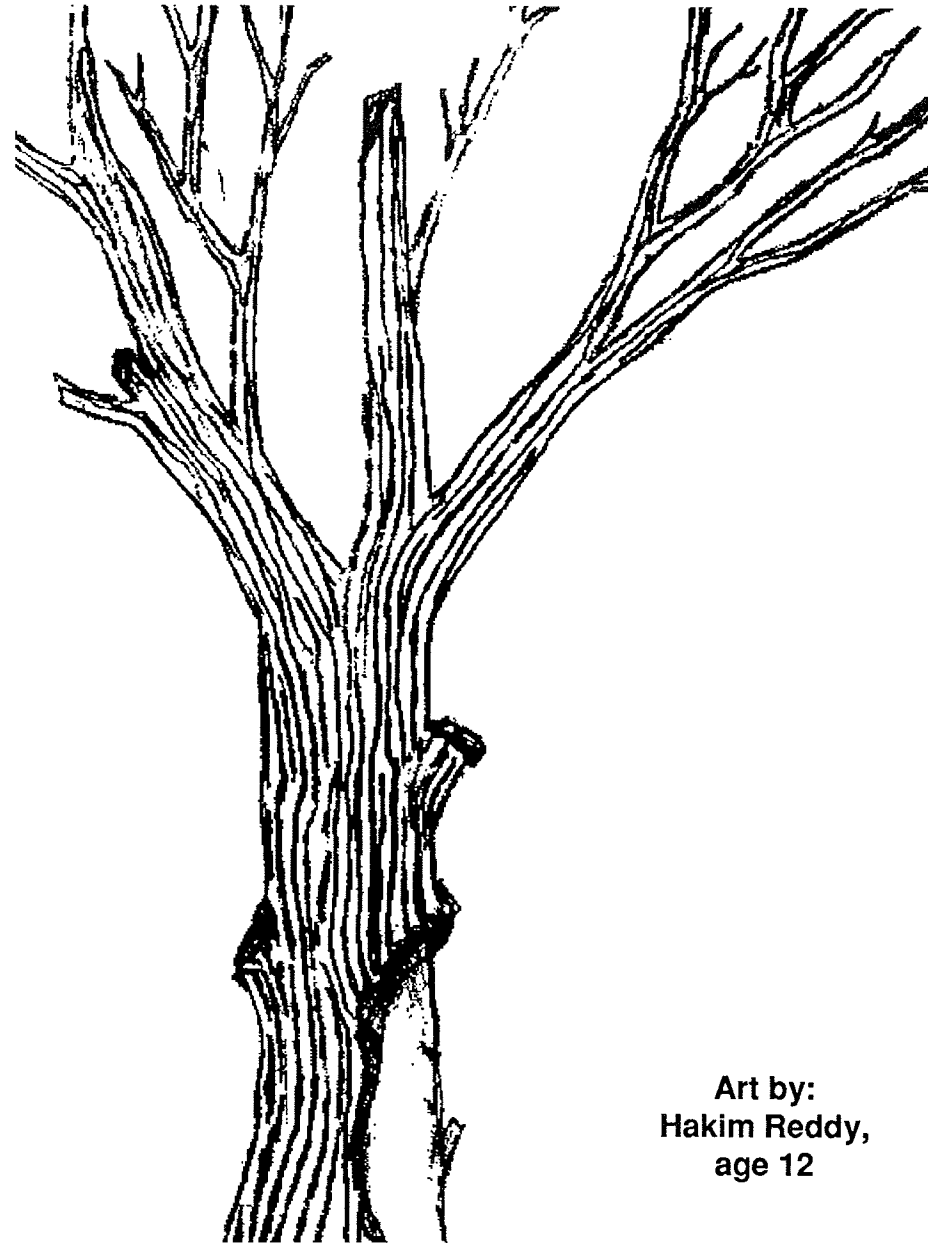
4. Next on your walk, notice the lovely Ponderosa Pines in the yard of 1404 E. Third. These trees may be some of the few trees that were on Third in the 1880's. Forest grown Ponderosas may reach heights of 200 feet and live for 500 years. They have the large pine cones which make excellent fire starters when dipped in wax.

5. The Box Elder at 1354 E. Third is interesting because it is a member of the maple family. If you tap it, you will get maple syrup! Of course, it would take about a hundred gallons of tapped syrup to



make a gallon of edible syrup. If you were hungry enough, you could do it! Unfortunately, these trees are very susceptible to bugs; the common Box Elder bug is named for this tree.

6. Across the street on the west side of Third Avenue in the 1200 block



Art by:  
Hakim Reddy,  
age 12

is Hood Mortuary. Note the way the Columnar Arbivita frame the front doorway. These trees naturally grow this way and are the basketball players of trees!

7. Just around the corner of 13th Street and Third Avenue, the third,



Art by:  
Hakim Reddy,  
age 12

fourth, and fifth trees from the corner are beautiful Walnut trees. The lumber from these trees is very valuable, but for our purposes they make a nice addition to the scenery of Third Avenue.



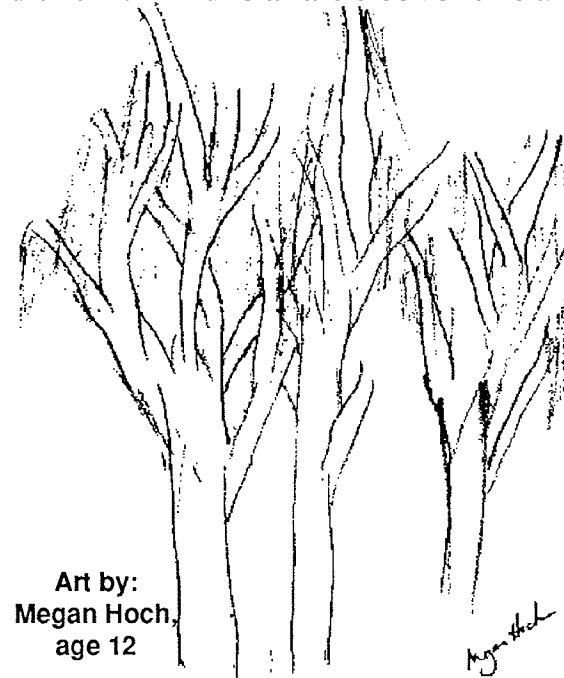
8. On the side of temporary classrooms at Smiley Middle School are some new trees. One of these (the second from 13th street corner) is an English Hawthorne.

9. In the 900 block of E. 4th Avenue (936 to be exact) are some Aspen trees. These are not supposed to grow in town, but when planted by the Johnston's in front of their home (which was brought down from Silverton in 1950), the trees flourished.

The Aspen look a bit like the Birch but have small leaves on slim stems. Aspen's thin braches allow the leaves to flutter and makes them pretty every time the wind comes along. Aspen should not line the streets however because of their low branches.

10. The Sugar Maple at 859 E. Third produces sap that is clear and full of sugar. Sugar Maples are similar to Norway Maples except they are were sensitive to our soil and sunburn very easily. With our elevation and soil, we only have a few of these beautiful trees. Every fall this tree turns a spectacular reddish-orange.

11. The Black Locust in the yard 747 E. Third is a rare tree for this area. It has beautiful clusters of white, pealike fragrant flowers in the spring. This is an old tree in the side yard of what was the home of one of Durango's founders, A. P. Camp. His wife was very involved in the Ladies Improvement Society which in 1892 appropriated \$10 per month from the city for watering the trees on the center of the Boulevard. The Boulevard, of course, we know today as Third Avenue.



Art by:  
Megan Hoch,  
age 12

### **Trees on Main Avenue by Elizabeth Phillips**

October 1, 1889, the City Engineer was instructed to expend the sum of \$150 for the purpose of planting trees on The Boulevard.

In 1978 the city decided to plant trees on Main Avenue, but this time the trees were \$150 each.

The trees on Main and E. Third are cared for by the City. Three types of trees were planted on Main: maples, locusts, and lindens. None of these trees are native to the area. Because they are in such confined areas and around heavy traffic, these trees will not live as long as trees will where they have more room to grow. But, the trees are a nice addition and look especially pretty when hung with white lights at Christmas time.

### **A Tree for Thought by Matt Clark**

As you see all the beautiful trees in Durango and the area around us, you wonder if we have any tall or old ones. We do! Durango has a three hundred year old tree which is not only old, but large.

On your way to Silverton, just past Mac's Hermosa Store, you will see on your left a small private golf course. If you take the next road to the left which is a service road and go for 1/2 mile, you will see this huge tree on a huge hill. If you get lost, it is about a mile south of Honeyville.

This tree is the tallest Gambel Oak in Colorado. It is 57 feet tall and has a spread of 65 feet. A spread is the farthest distance between the end of the branches. It's circumference at the base is 12 1/2 feet.

All trees are special, but some are extra special, like this one.

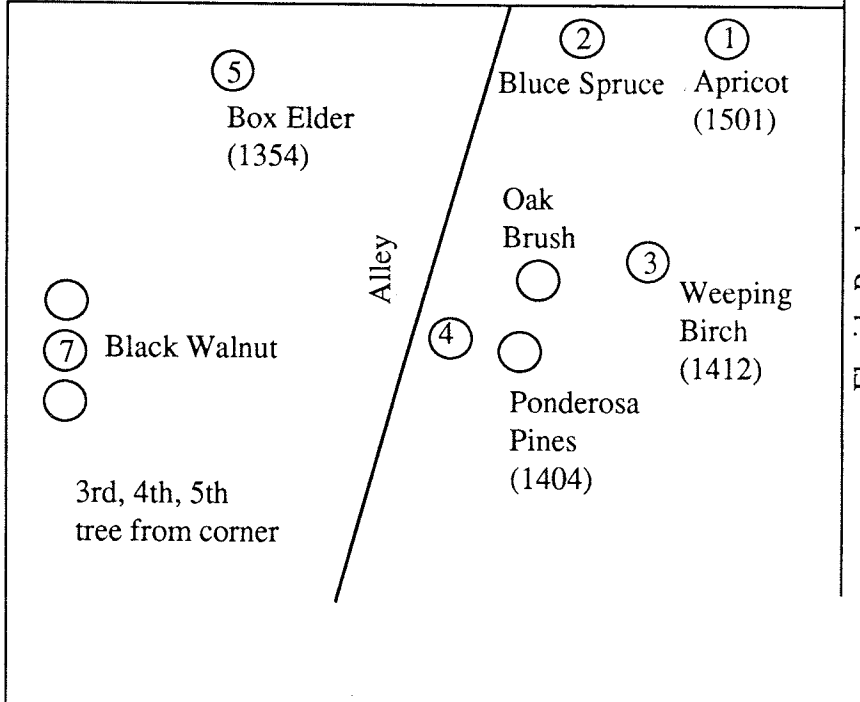
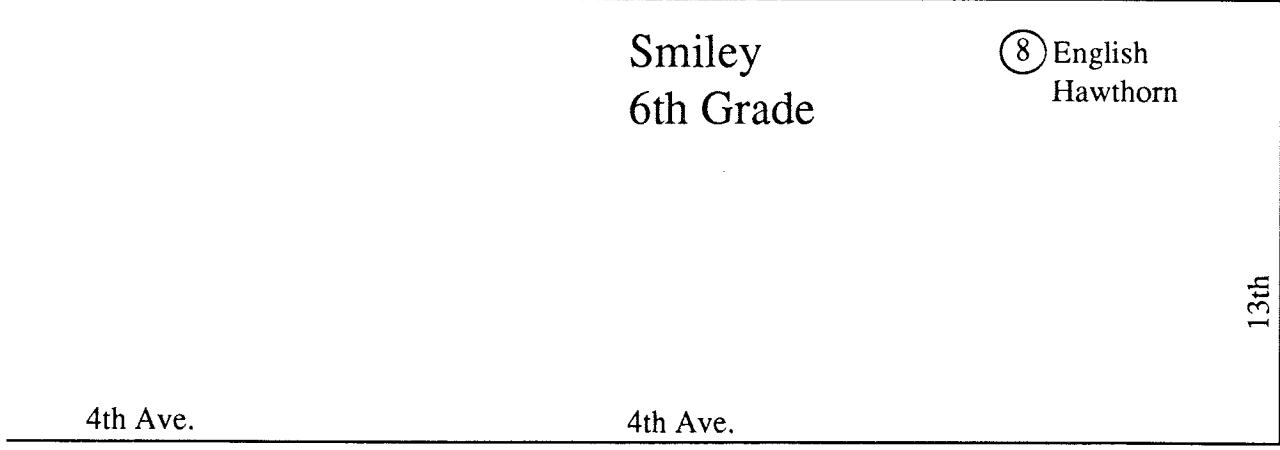
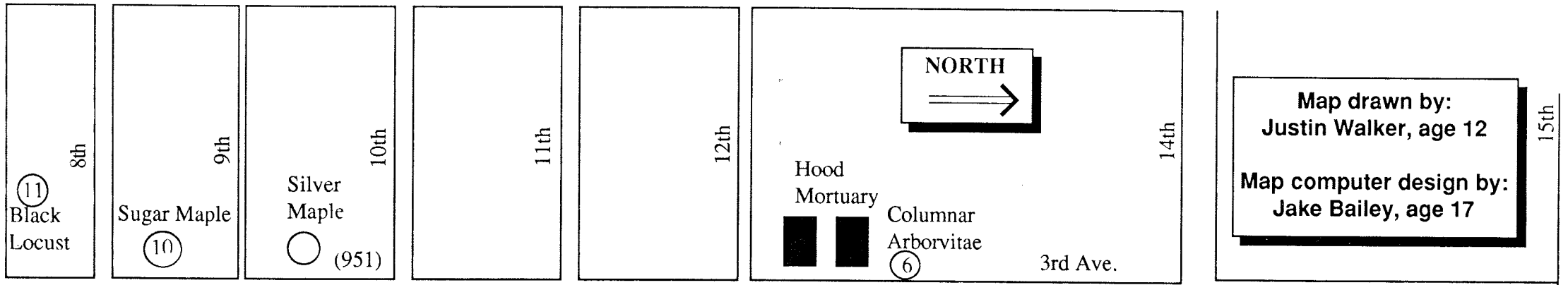
To conclude our walk, we mention one of the oldest, trees within the city limits. The huge Cottonwood in the photo on page 11 is located at 2535 West Second Avenue in front of the home of Rod and Laurie Barker. The two photographs on pages 10 and 11 illustrate what one hundred years of tree growth looks like. The tree was planted by Judge Dwyer in the 1890's (page 10) and is lovingly cared for by the Barker's in the 1990's (page 11). It is listed as the 14th largest cottonwood in Colorado. What stories this giant could tell!



The 14th largest Cottonwood tree in Colorado as it appears in the 1890's. In the 1890's the home was owned by Robert and Mary Jane Clarke Dwyer.



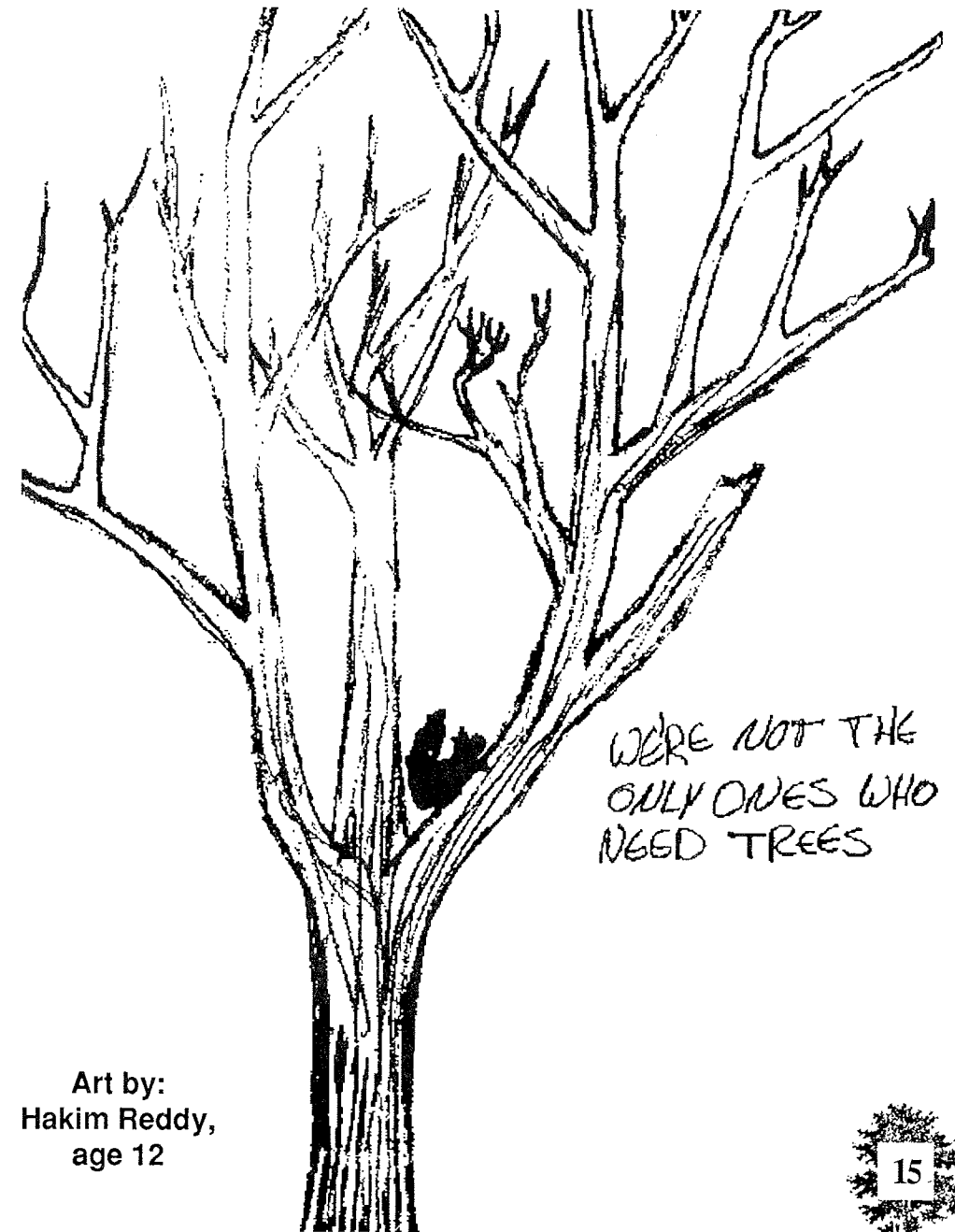
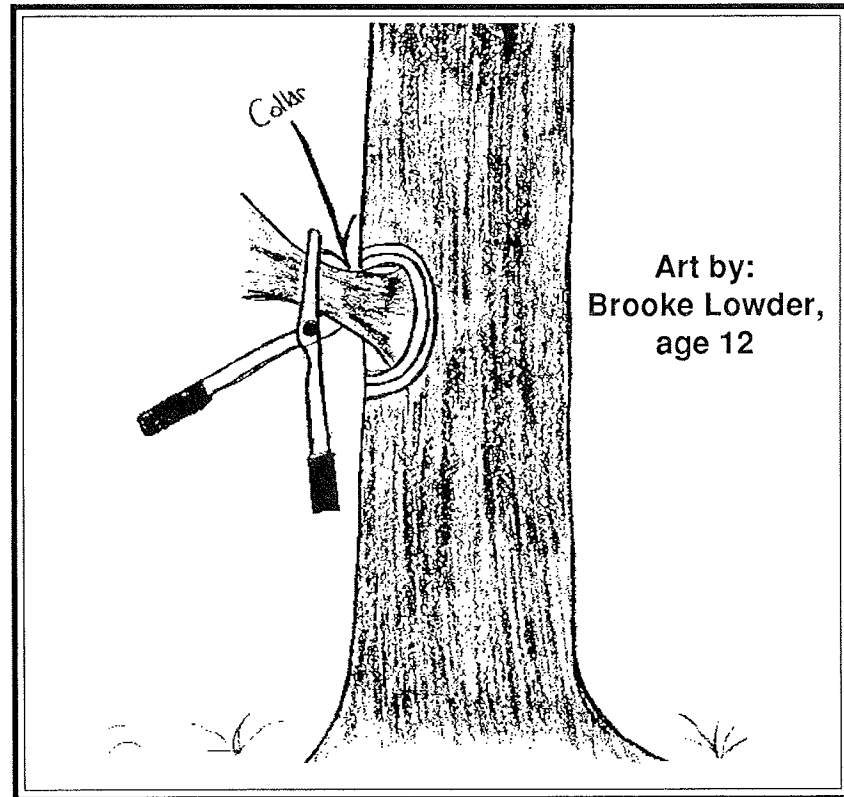
The old giant Cottonwood at 2535 West Second Avenue as it appears today in front of the home of Rod and Laurie Barker. Photo by freelance photographer Miles Davies.



## Chapter Two: A Branch of Facts

Question: Scott Mann, age 11, grade 5: When pruning a tree, how much do you take off? The right way to prune a tree is to cut off the branch a little bit away from the collar of the branch. The collar is the beginning part of the branch where it is fatter than the rest of the branch. If you prune the branch too close to the trunk of the tree, you could harm the tree. All trees get pruned at different times of the year, but the best time to prune a tree is before the tree gets its leaves. Some reasons for pruning a tree are to improve the fruit growth of a tree and to cut the dead branches off so the tree will look better. Some people prune trees for safety reasons and to get rid of any diseased limbs that the tree might have. So, prune your tree right and it will grow tall and full!

Answer by: Jessica Surmi age 12





Question: Santo Caputa, age 11, grade 5:  
How often do trees need water?

Every tree needs a different amount of water. It all depends on the soil, the weather, and the amount of moisture. It also can depend on the slope because when the water runs down, it can pass over the ground without soaking into the soil. The only way to find if a tree needs water is to dig 6 to 8 inches down and look at the soil. Make sure that before you water a tree the soil doesn't bundle up into a ball when you squeeze it in your hand because that means that it has enough water. Don't try to water a tree near its trunk because the roots spread out a lot further. If a tree gets too much water, it will drown.

Answer by: Andrea Mitchell age 12

Question: Jimmy McGown, age 11, grade 5:

Can you take the bark off a tree, and if you do, what will happen?

Yes, you can take the bark off a tree, but if you do, the tree may die.

The tree has nutrients that go from the roots to the leaves. The leaves turn the nutrients into a sugar substance that go back to the roots. If you take off the bark, it will stop the system, which stops the growth of the tree, which may cause the tree to die. The system is like our blood in the body. The bark protects and covers the living part of the tree. If the bark is taken off, it will uncover the living part of the tree, and the tree could die. So don't take the bark off the tree.

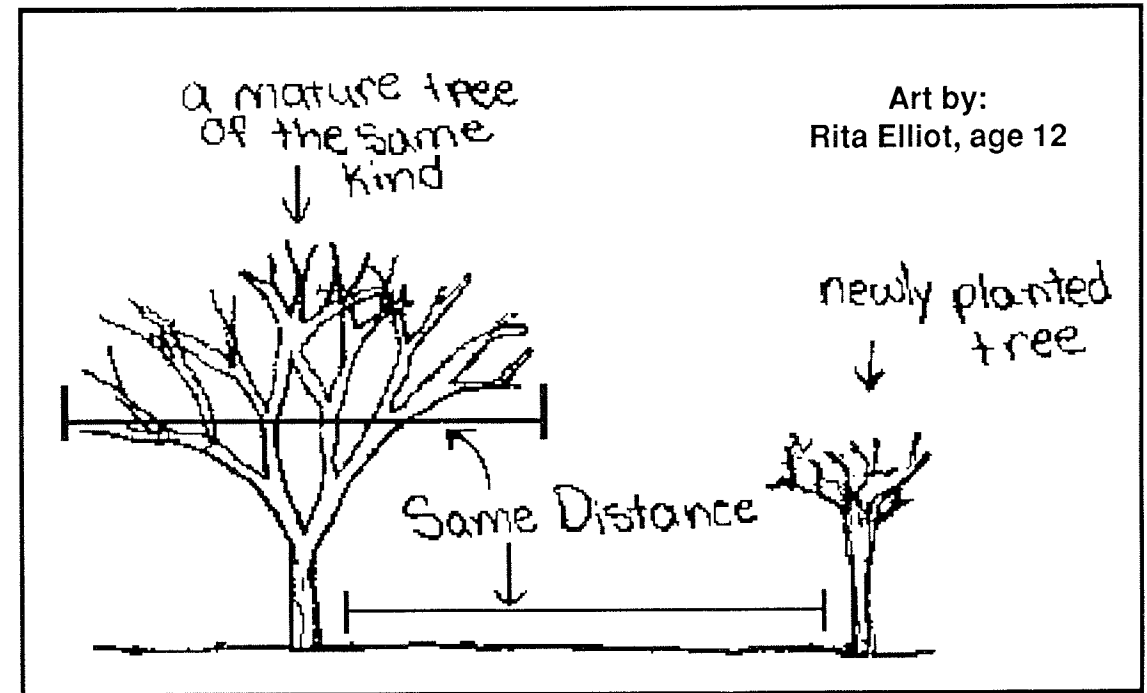
Answer by: Clint Kennedy age 12

Question: T.J. Baxter, age 10, grade 5:

How far apart do you plant trees?

How far apart to plant trees all depends on the type of tree. To find out how far apart to plant the trees, you should first find out how wide the tree gets when it is fully mature. Then you measure from the middle of the tree to the longest branch and multiply the measurement by two. That answer is how far apart you should plant the two trees. If you plant trees too close together, they don't get enough moisture, nutrients, or sunlight. So, remember not to plant trees too close together.

Answer by: Gabe Wilson age 12



## Chapter Three: A Branch of Caring

Q-How do you tell evergreens apart?

James Meyer, age 12

A-There are many ways you can tell one evergreen from another. For example, Juniper trees have jagged leaves and what is known as juicy berries on their branches. Pine trees have bunches of needles connected to the branches by a papery wrapping at the base of the needles. Pine needles may have either long or short needles.

Spruces, such as the Blue Spruce, have stiff needles which are square shaped, and they feel as if they are prickly. The needles "sit" on stubs of wood that are attached to the branch. Unlike pines, spruces have only one needle that is attached to a stub of wood.

Fir trees are known for having flat, flexible needles. If you rub the needles in your hands, they will feel almost soft. The physical appearance of trees is the easiest way to tell one tree from another.

by: Tiffany Tucker, age 11



Q- How do trees get rings on them?

Summer Million, age 10

A- A tree develops one ring per year. If a tree receives a lot of water, the rings on the tree will be far apart. If a tree receives little or no water, the rings will be close together.

You can tell a lot of things from the rings on a tree. You can see if the tree has been in a fire or how old it is. You can also tell if it has been damaged by insects.

by Danny Garcia, age 11

Q- Why do evergreens stay green?

Amy Monn, age 10

A- Evergreens stay green all the time because they make chlorophyll in the winter. Evergreens are always photosynthesizing. They store water because they have small leaves or needles and don't have broad leaves.

by Kendra Coloff, age 11

Why do trees lose their leaves?

Jamie Krafthefer, age 10

Deciduous trees are the trees with broad leaves. They lose their leaves to conserve moisture each fall. This is because in winter there is not much moisture. Leaves let out moisture, so if the leaves were still on the trees the tree could lose more moisture than it is able to take up. By losing their leaves, the trees keep in moisture until spring.

by Anna Urbanc, age 11

## Chapter Four: A Branch of Poetry

### If Trees Could Talk

If trees could talk, what would they say. Would they say "Hello" or would they shout "good day!"

Would they sing, or shout, or laugh, or cry.  
would they joke, or growl, or gasp, or sigh?

Would they brag about the things they have seen?  
Or would they be disgusted at the things they have been?

Maybe they would be satisfied with the treatment they have had,  
or would they feel aggressive and negative or mad?

Would they whimper, or whisper, or bellow, or yell,  
Unfortunately, with trees, you can never really tell.

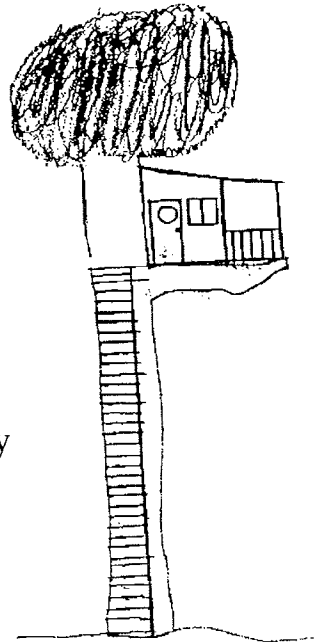
by Ingrid Gulliford  
age 12

### A Tree Fort

A place high above everyone else. You can be a great king or you can be yourself. A place of your own or to share. A place to run and hide or spend a long lazy day. Or just a place to be safe.

by Matt Ashburn  
age 12

Art by:  
Matt  
Ashburn,  
age 12



SO TALL,  
SO BEAUTIFUL,  
SO BOLD,  
SO STRONG,  
INVITING AS IS,  
TO SIT UNDER ALL DAY LONG,  
A PLACE TO REST,  
A PLACE TO PLAY,  
SO GRATEFUL FOR THEM,  
IN EVERY WAY.  
I GIVE YOU COMFORT IN MOST OF MY FORMS,  
A BOOK,  
A BED,  
OR EVEN A HOUSE,  
THE WALLS YOU ADORN.  
PEOPLE TAKE CARE OF ME,  
TO SEE I AM FIT,  
A PLACE ON A HOT DAY,  
TO CALM DOWN AND SIT.  
I AM VERY PROUD TO SEE,  
SO TALL,  
SO BEAUTIFUL,  
SO BOLD,  
SO STRONG,  
A SYMBOL OF LOVE,  
FOR I AM A TREE.

By Will Calori  
age 11

### Trees...

Strong branches holding  
Waving leaves.  
Deep roots penetrating  
Into the deep earth.  
Grandparents lying  
In the shade  
While  
Children climb and swing  
From its sturdy branches.  
The cold air comes  
And the people leave.  
The winds blow,  
The leaves flutter to the ground.  
Cold and still the trees stand;  
Waiting for Spring;  
The time he can play and give shade  
again.

by Anna Urbanc  
age 11

### Trees In Summer

Trees are tall and beautiful,  
Reaching for the sky,  
Effective to every soul,  
Enjoying rustling their leaves,  
Silent in the night.

Inspiring to artists,  
Never too dull, never too dreary.

Some talk loud, Some talk quiet,  
Understanding people,  
More people crowd around,  
Memorizing its beauty,  
Entirely enchanted while it says,  
"Rest underneath me."

by Katie Camarca  
age 11

LOVABLE  
ENCHANTING  
AFFECTIONATE  
VALUABLE  
ELEGANT  
SOFT

by Jonathan Hurt  
age 12

Placed on this earth  
In God's hands  
Never to be disturbed  
Even by man.

by Tiffany Tucker  
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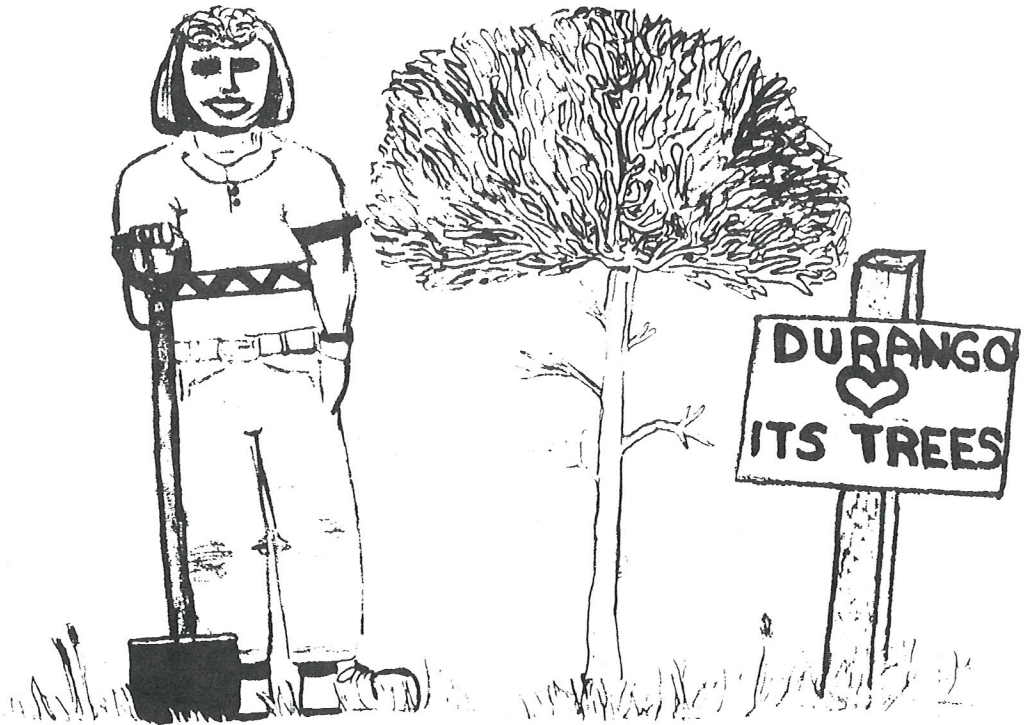
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**Art by:  
Abel Lopez, age 12**



## **TREE CITY USA**

The National Arbor Day Foundation, in cooperation with the United States Forest Service and participating Foresters of the National Association of State Foresters, recognizes the towns and cities all over America who meet the standards of the TREE CITY USA program and are effectively managing their tree resources.

Durango, Colorado has met these standards and has been duly recognized annually since 1980. Also, this year, Durango met the criteria for the Growth Award; a new program recognizing cities that go above and beyond the requirements for TREE CITY USA.

Each year, on the first Friday in May, the Durango Parks and Recreation Department and the Parks and Forestry Board celebrate Arbor Day with a tree planting ceremony and participation from area schools. During the ceremony, Durango receives its TREE CITY USA recognition and recognizes those who have planted Memorial or Honorary trees. The location changes from year to year. This year, the ceremony was held at Riverview School and 450 elementary students participated through singing and tree planting. Fourteen native trees were planted at Riverview School, creating Durango's first outdoor classroom. If you are interested in Durango's Arbor Day celebration, please call the Durango Parks and Recreation Department.