

New Energy and Ideas from Cheyenne: An SMA Arborist Exchange from Slovenia to Wyoming

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Dr. Lena Marion visits with Fort Collins City Forester Tim Buchanan under a bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) tree.

After hosting Lisa Olson for a week in Ljubljana, Slovenia, I knew that I would have a great time with her when I visited her in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Lisa is very special person with a lot of positive energy. She raised three children while building a successful arboricultural career. She is an ISA certified arborist, director of urban forestry for the City of Cheyenne, a member of the city tree board and a member of ISA Rocky Mountain Chapter. Lisa is a graduate of North Dakota State University. She taught horticulture and arboriculture at NDSU's School of Forestry in Bottineau before moving to Cheyenne.

Arborists know that the best tree for the future is a young and healthy tree. In the same manner, Lisa is aware that education needs to be planted in young minds. That's why she is putting a lot of effort into education of children through diverse tree walks and an interesting nature center and tree house, which are parts of Cheyenne's Lions Park Urban Forestry Interpretive Center. The tree house and nature center are connected by a sidewalk imprinted with urban animal tracks and plaques with descriptions of the animals. The tree house has decks from 4 to 20 feet (1.2 to 6.1 m) high. On the lower level you can learn about tree roots; other levels describe the purpose of the trunk, branches, or crown of a tree, with an emphasis



The tree house, part of Cheyenne's Lions Park Urban Forestry Interpretive Center, has several decks to provide a bird's-eye view of life in the urban forest.

on the tree's part in the life of urban mammals, birds, and insects. The nature center has visual and hands-on displays for people of all ages and learning styles.

In her 23-year career as arborist in Cheyenne, Lisa has overseen the planting of thousands of trees. The City's trees are very well maintained and reflect the clear vision and talents of the city arborist. Severe drought over the last ten years has called for conservation measures in watering practices within Cheyenne. The urban forestry division wanted to do its part and uses recycled water for trees in non-irrigated zones, including water from swimming pools that are drained in the fall. The drought has impacted the work schedule such that the staff's most time-consuming activity throughout the year is irrigation.

Lisa arranged meetings for me with many experienced arborists. In Fort Collins, Colorado, I met city forester Tim Buchanan, who presented his work and tree program. I was surprised to learn that in Fort Collins, every new building's site plan has to be approved by the city forester. Colorado State Forester Ralph Campbell presented us his work with the state's nursery where trees are grown from seed and then sold as seedlings to citizens. In Windsor, CO, city forester Ken Kawamura described to us his experiences with the city tree board and showed us the consequences of a tornado. Damaged homes and broken trees that I saw left me speechless. The tree board was concerned about the trees left standing in front of abandoned homes that were destroyed by the tornado and the lack of care they

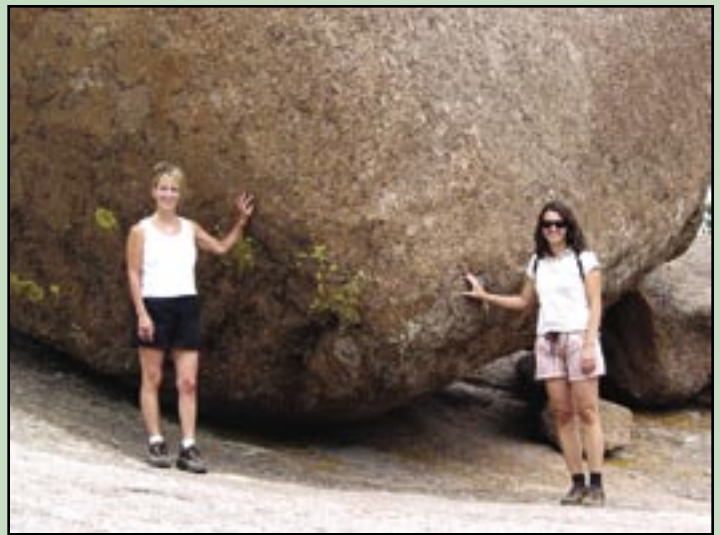


Lena Marion took this picture of the biggest girdling root she had ever seen; the tree is a Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*) in Cheyenne's Lions Park.

were receiving. The board wanted to keep the trees alive and watered so when the homeowners returned to rebuild they would still have their trees—something that might help to make it feel a little more like home.

We also took a trip to Laramie, Wyoming to chat with Paul Harrison, director of parks and recreation there, about his urban forest. Wyoming State Forester Mark Hughes took us on a long trip to the mountains where he showed me the power of nature, or more specifically, pine beetle populations. The damage is such that we saw mountains with only a few live trees. Pine beetles have also invaded trees in the cities, but several spraying programs are in place. In Cheyenne, the pine beetle was introduced by firewood brought in from the infested forest land. The City's recommendations are to keep affected trees watered and healthy, to remove infested trees in a timely manner, and to carefully inspect firewood brought into the city.

In the course of my exchange, I learned that effective contact with the public is critical in applying arboriculture in the city. In this regard, I found out that I and the company that I work for are on the right path. We have the knowledge that we need to disseminate information to citizens. We have to show the general public what proper tree care is and that we are the ones that can do it.



Exchange host Lisa Olson (left) and participant Lena Marion (right) hiked in Vedauvoo, Wyoming, on their way to Medicine Bow National Park to look at bark beetle damage on conifers.



The Colorado State Forest Service grows various tree species from seeds that are then sold to citizens.

The SMA Arborist Exchange program is not just a great travel opportunity or chance to make new friends among colleagues. It allows you to meet lots of new people who all understand your problems at work and is a great source of new ideas and solutions. I came away feeling that I'd received an infusion of energy to make all those ideas real. Within three months of returning from my exchange week in the U.S., I translated one short publication about trees, wrote two, and printed all of them. Arborists from my company, TISA d.o.o.—together with the City of Ljubljana and the Society for Protecting Bats—organized a free public workshop in the city center titled, "Trees and Bats are Ljubljana Citizens, Too." We are preparing a new Web site, we supported an art exhibition about trees, and we established the Slovenian Society of Arboriculture. I am thankful to SMA and the program sponsors for this great opportunity and to Lisa for her friendship and all the knowledge she shared with me. 🍃