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The Colorful Season of Spring

By Bill Meyer, WSU Senior Groundskeeper (Retired)

As we finally say farewell to the winter months, we can look forward to the colorful season of spring. Spring showcases the trees more than any other season, beginning with the explosion of white flowers on the 'Merrill' Magnolia trees and culminating with the large red flowers of the Red Horsechestnut. The Eastern Redbud and the ornamental Pear and Plum trees keep the colors constantly changing during the middle of spring. Let's look at these trees in a little more depth.

Nestled in the northwest corner of Somsen Hall is WSU's 'Merrill' Magnolia. This Magnolia is one of the trees letting us know that spring is fast approaching. Look for this tree to bloom in late April displaying a spectacular bloom of white flowers that blanket the entire tree.

A number of similar Magnolias can be found forming a circle around the plaza in front of Kreuger Library. This past winter one of the trees was hit at the base by a snowplow after a heavy snowfall. The following day a WSU neighbor was walking her dog through the campus and noticed the tree, which was in good condition (other than being severed from its root system). After asking permission from WSU, the neighbor dragged the tree home, set the tree up for the family's Christmas tree, and put it in water. She artfully decorated the tree with small white lights and hung up several well placed decorations. Since Magnolia trees bloom early in the spring, she hoped that this one might bloom during the Christmas season. Amazingly, white flowers covered the entire tree on New Year's morning!

Other Magnolias on campus worth checking out include the four 'Ann' Magnolias that can be found on the east side of Pasteur Hall. They produce a beautiful pinkish-purple flower that last more than a week. They were made possible by a donation of Barb Ramer. Finally, three young 'Butterfly' Magnolias can be found on the east side of Maxwell Hall. They display an attractive yellow flower.

After the Magnolia trees bloom on campus, a progression of flowering trees strut their colors. Make sure to check out the white flowers on the ornamental Pear tree on the northeast corner of Minne Hall. On the northwest side of the same building, a small Canadian Plum tree can be found. White popcorn like flowers adorn this tree. A few days later the Eastern Redbud blooms. If you have never seen this tree bloom, you will witness a mass of lavender flowers cover the tree. You can find one of these trees directly by the main entrance to Minne Hall and on the edge of the Meditation Garden east of the Performing Arts Center. This past spring the Eastern Redbud flowered an unusually long time. I saw many students having their picture taken next to this tree.

Scattered all over campus are the colorful Crabapple trees. They usually bloom close to graduation day and are a big attraction. Did you know that we have over 10 different varieties of Crabapple trees on campus? Their colors range from white to pink to red.

One of the last blooming trees of spring is the Ruby Red 'Briotti' Horsechestnut and its sister tree the 'Fort McNair' Red Horsechestnut. These trees produce beautiful large blooms of deep, scarlet flowers that are the talk of the town when blooming in mid May. The most mature of these trees can be found on the south side of Gildemeister Hall.

As usual, many other trees can be spotted throughout the WSU grounds during the spring. It's a great time to take a leisurely stroll through the campus.

