



## **Friday, January 15 is Arbor Day.**

Did you ever wonder where Arbor Day came from?

Arbor Day has been celebrated for more than 125 years. It was started by a man in Nebraska who thought that trees were so important to us that he wanted to set aside a way to honor them. So in 1872, Mr. Sterling Morton, a journalist, started this tree-planting day, first asking school children to plant at least one tree and taking care of it. Prizes were offered to groups or people who planted the most trees.

On that first Arbor Day, students and civic groups across the state planted more than one million trees! They followed the tree planting with a parade, and each classroom took care of their tree for the rest of the school year.

Mr. Morton thought that trees were important because he realized that trees provide so many products to help make people's lives better.

Trees give us:

- food, such as fruit and nuts;
- wood for building homes and making newspapers;
- shade for non-air-conditioned homes (this was before air conditioning was invented); and
- protection from wind for our homes, gardens and animals.

From its noble beginnings in Nebraska, Arbor Day is celebrated in every state in the United States today. The exact day it is celebrated, though, is different, depending upon when is the best planting time in that area. Florida's Arbor Day is the third Friday in January each year, so in 2010 the day is January 15. It is held much later in colder states. For example, Arbor Day is in late May in cold states such as Maine and Alaska.

If you have questions about good trees to plant in west-central Florida, please contact the Pasco Cooperative Extension Service at 352-521-4288 or visit us on the web at <http://pasco.ifas.ufl.edu>

by BJ Jarvis, January 2010