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"120 feet tall cottonwood wins largest tree designation"



When Joel and Denise Dendinger purchased their property, they were asked by the previous owners to never cut down a mammoth cottonwood on their property. They wouldn't dream of doing so and that tree was recently designated as the largest deciduous tree in Norfolk by the City of Norfolk Tree Advisory Board.

Pam Bergstrom, Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District forester, and Steve Rasmussen, Nebraska Forest Service District forester, went around town measuring the various trees nominated by Norfolk citizens for being the largest tree in town. When they came to the Dendinger tree at (appropriately) 820 North Oak Street, they knew they had a winner.

The tree measures 120 feet tall with some branches having the circumference of an average sized tree. The crown or spread of the tree from one end to the other spans 110 feet across. The circumference of the tree at four and a half feet from the ground is an amazing 25 feet six inches.

Dendinger said the house was

Tree board members present the Dendingers with a plaque for having the largest deciduous tree in Norfolk. From the left: Joel and Denise Dendinger; Jarad Dahlkoetter; Dr. G. Tom Surber; and Pam Bergstrom.

built about 1896 so he estimated the tree to be at least 100 years old.

“The North Fork of the Elkhorn River used to run by here so there were a number of large trees here. When they put in the flood control in the sixties, some of the trees had to come down but not this tree. We have people stop by who are amazed how big it is,” Joel Dendinger said.

Cottonwood that it is, it makes quite the “cotton” seed in the spring. Dendinger showed pictures taken on his phone of the ground covered with the cotton resembling a couple of inches of snow had fallen.

“If the wind comes up we have a blizzard of cotton,” Dendinger said.

Members of the Tree Board presented the Dendingers with a plaque that they plan on attaching to a fence post near the tree. The contest was announced this summer as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration of Norfolk.