“Tree of the Month” with Forester Fred

The mighty Bur Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa*. If there was ever a “man’s tree” the Bur Oak would be the tree. Slow to mature but hard to get rid of. Bur Oak can live for hundreds of years. Maybe not the greatest street tree but it sure thrives in parks and open spaces. This large tree can grow to over 100 feet tall. Bur Oak has a simple, lobed leaf that alternates branch attachment. One way to aid in differentiating Bur Oak from other oaks, is the leaf is narrow near the attachment, and three times as wide near the end of the leaf. Another identification tool for this type of oak is by its acorns. Where the acorn cap meets the acorn often fringed or hair like burs protrudes, giving this oak its name, Bur Oak.

A Bur Oak owner might wonder why there are bees flying around their oak tree or might notice small galls on the branches. This is caused by an insect called the Oak Bullet Gall, it is a wasp called a cynipid. When the wasp larvae feeds on the tree the tree responds by developing tissue around the larvae called a gall. Once the wasps leave the gall, the gall can hang on the tree for a period of time, sometimes five years. Property owners often consider these galls to be ugly. Most experts would classify the Bullet Gall as a non-tree killer but there is some growth reduction that occurs. They are hard to treat against.

Although a hard tree to transplant this zone 3 tree does fairly well in even alkaline soils. Billings is home to the State Champion Bur Oak tree measuring 86 feet tall, 124 inches around, and having a crown spread of 75 feet wide (off of Philips St. and Riverside Rd).

If you are looking for an oak tree that will survive well in Billings that has minimal insect and disease issues consider planting a Bur Oak.