

THE DESERT ARBORIST

Go Climb a Tree *By Dan Stevens*

Like so many others, I first started climbing trees soon after I was able to walk. At that young age, I never dreamed there was such a thing as a professional tree climber, nor did I have any idea that tree climbers could compete for prizes and prestige in intense tree climbing competitions all over the world. For me and for my fellow competitors, tree climbing is more than just a job – it's our life.

On Saturday, March 6, the Arizona Community Tree Council (ACTC) hosts the Arizona Tree Climbing Competition (TCC), where the best climbers in the state are determined on an annual basis. This year, it is our privilege to hold the competition at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum in Superior, AZ. Thanks to the tremendous size of the majestic, well-cared-for eucalyptus trees found in the arboretum – some reaching 120 feet in height – this is one of the best places to hold a tree climbing competition in all of Arizona. Although one drives to the arboretum from Phoenix, the nearest metropolitan center, through a sea of desert rock and cacti as far as the eye can see, the Arboretum is truly an oasis with 3,200 different plants.

If you are fortunate enough to attend the competition this year, you will witness the most elite tree climbing competitors in the state of Arizona as they go head-to-head to determine who is the best. The champion has a chance to go on to represent Arizona in the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (WCISA) TCC.

This year, the WCISA TCC will be held in Arizona for the first time since 2007. It is scheduled for June 12-13 at Peart Park in Casa Grande.

Last year's champion was Margarito Garibo, and we hope to see him back this year to defend his crown.



Dan Stevens is an enthusiastic participant in the Arizona Community Tree Council's competition in 2009. The 2010 Competition will be held at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum in Superior on March 5. Photo courtesy: Aaron Charlton.

Watching these guys gracefully climb and swing from limb to limb will remind you of fictional characters like Tarzan and Spiderman, or Olympic gymnasts.

As fun as it is to watch, it is even more fun to participate. I myself am a former Arizona champion and will compete this year with hopes of winning it again. Tree climbing competitions like this one have helped me to grow my business, Living Tree Service Inc., both by improving my skills as an arborist, and by allowing me to network with other tree people whose insight and influence have proven to be a great benefit. Competing as a tree climber has also added a sense of excitement and adventure to everyday tasks that I perform as an arborist, that might otherwise become monotonous or repetitive.

Tree climbing is a dangerous occupation, and we all want everyone to go home safely at the end of the day. For this reason, the competition

strongly emphasizes the importance of safety in tree climbing and the use of proper gear approved for the industry.

All competitors go through strict gear inspections prior to the climbing of any trees, and they are encouraged to perform similar inspections on their own every day as they work as professional tree climbers. Personal protective gear, such as safety glasses, hardhats, appropriate clothing, and footwear, are especially emphasized.

There will also be activities for children and a nature walk through the Arboretum led by Terry Michael, an authority on the many varieties of desert plants found in the Arboretum.

As many of you know, Terry is one of the most entertaining and knowledgeable people in the industry. Don't miss out on this opportunity. Bring the family and make a day out of it. I promise you won't regret it.

If you are a climber and want to improve your skills and have a great time, we would love to have you join us. Pre-registration is required, though. No walk up registrations are allowed. The registration deadline is February 25.

The competition starts at 7:30 a.m. and usually lasts most of the day. Never competed before? No worries...ACTC is holding a class on February 12 to familiarize first-time competitors with what to expect at the TCC. For further details see <http://aztrees.org>.

Driving from Phoenix, Boyce Thompson Arboretum is located just before Superior, AZ. You will see the turnoff on your right. Admission is \$7.50 for adults and \$3.00 for children, ages 5-12. Children under 5 get in free.

This will be a terrific opportunity for everyone to enjoy a fun-packed day at one of the most beautiful places in the Grand Canyon State. Don't miss it! See you there. ▼

Dan Stevens is the owner of Living Tree Service in Mesa, AZ. For more information, visit www.livingtreeservice.com.

News

LANDSCAPE RETROFIT CLASSES

Learn how to convert water-guzzling, water-wasting yards into less thirsty, water efficient, energy saving and attractive landscapes through University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's landscape retrofit classes. You will be coached through the design process, creating your own design for building a new or redesigning an old landscape. Over 500 Las Vegas residents have completed the classes with outstanding results; some have been presented landscape design awards.

The eight-week class begins on February 1 and continues each Monday morning from 9 a.m. to Noon through March 22 at the Lifelong Learning Center located at 8050 Paradise Road, Las Vegas. Class size is limited and there is a \$50 fee.

For more information, please contact either the Master Gardener Help line at 702.257.5555, Bob Morris at morrisr@unce.unr.edu, or the instructor, Mel Hengen, at mojavemel@aol.com. ▼

Specimen Trees for Desert Landscapes
Arid Zone Trees

480.987.9094 Fax 480.987.9092
information@aridzonetrees.com
www.aridzonetrees.com

QUALITY.
VARIETY.
SERVICE.

SOD.

WEST COAST
TURF
Life is short. Sod it!

800/447-1840
www.westcoastturf.com