

# In the shade



Google Earth

Spanish Woods Drive, Rockport, January 2017

*How  
ISA Texas helps  
with Hurricane  
Harvey  
recovery...  
page 4*



Google Earth

Spanish Woods Drive, Rockport, September, 2017

**NEWSLETTER OF THE ISA TEXAS CHAPTER**  
**April, 2018**

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# President's Letter

*Micah Pace*



Happy spring and Happy 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, ISA Texas! That's right. We're celebrating 40 years in 2018 and we're hoping to make it the best one yet!

Your ISA Texas board and executive committee have been busy developing and conducting multiple educational programs to continue to promote professionalism in arboriculture around the state. March was a busy month, having sponsored the following events: Cranes and Trees Workshop in Fort Worth; San Antonio Arborist Association Bilingual Tree Care Workshop; Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist, and Utility Specialist Certification Exams in Selma; and an Emerald Ash Borer Workshop in Tyler. I would like to personally thank Zaina Gates, our vice president and educational events chair, for tireless efforts and leadership. Thank you to her entire committee for their dedication and support: Jason Alfaro, Cody Goldman, Steve Driskill, Evan Anderson, Steve White, Emmett Muennink, Gene Gehring, Rebecca Johnson, April Rose, and Paul Johnson.

Please visit our calendar of events often (<http://isatexas.com/events/>) to plan your next workshop attendance.

The ISA Texas board and the strategic planning committee will begin important work on building the framework for our new three-year strategic plan this month. Our wonderful organization continues to grow, and thoughtful planning as to how we can continue to meet and exceed members' expectations, while allowing for growth, is crucial to our long-term success. We will be using membership feedback published in the *2017 Needs Assessment Report* provided by ISA to help us make ISA Texas the best it can be. Stay tuned for more.

The 2018 Texas Tree Climbing Championship is right around the corner! This year it will be located in Getzendaner Park in Waxahachie on May 18–19. Thank you to Markus Smith, chair, and Jim Dossett, co-chair, for their leadership. Please contact us to see how you can help support this great event.

The 2018 Texas Tree Conference planning is well underway and we are looking forward to another record-breaking year. Please mark your calendars for September 26–28 to attend the 38th annual Texas Tree Conference in Waco. Want to volunteer? Contact Emily King, 2018 TTC chair, for opportunities.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent the membership as your president this year. Feel free to email me at [micahp@preservationtree.com](mailto:micahp@preservationtree.com) or contact our executive director, John Giedraitis, if there are any specific concerns or assistance you need. Thank you for all you do to make Texas arboriculture such a great industry.

Sincerely,

## In the Shade

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by the Texas Chapter,  
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**In the Shade**  
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## ON THE COVER

These Google Earth photos show before and after views of a Rockport neighborhood that was badly damaged by Hurricane Harvey. In January ISA Texas volunteers spent a day assessing tree damage and helping homeowners make good decisions about these trees. See page 4 for more about the volunteer workday.

I have traveled  
among foreign trees.  
Some of them kneel  
when they approach mountains.  
Like them I have learned  
quite a bit about the ground.

—from *The Bent-Over Ones*  
by William Stafford

# Rockport-Fulton Volunteer Arborist Work Day Supports Hurricane Harvey Recovery

by Bill Green, Regional Urban Forester, South Texas-RGV-Coastal Bend, Texas A&M Forest Service

ISA Texas carried out a volunteer work day in January to support Hurricane Harvey recovery in the Coastal Bend Rockport-Fulton area. Thirty volunteers made home visits to over 200 Rockport property owners to provide recommendations on the needs of their trees that were damaged by the storm.

ISA Texas coordinated its efforts with the Rockport City Council, Aransas County Commissioners Court, the Aransas County Long-Term Recovery Team, and Texas A&M Forest Service. ISA Certified Arborist Mark Bird (City Arborist, San Antonio) chaired the event, with the invaluable support of Texas A&M AgriLife Aransas County Extension Agent Ginger Easton Smith. ISA Texas President Micah Pace and Executive Director John Giedraitis also provided logistical support to prepare the event and then were present in Rockport-Fulton making home visits.

Certified Arborist-led teams of two persons completed ground-based level 1 visual assessments of approximately 400 trees eight inches or greater in diameter located within

the improved landscape of registered properties. The Texas A&M Forest Service tree risk mobile app was used to collect data. The most common concerns encountered were leaning trees where the root plate was disturbed and anchor roots had been broken. Other trees presented different risks to property owners; these risks included broken and detached branches. All normal pruning and restoration pruning treatments followed ANSI A300 pruning standards and best management pruning practices. In some case removal was indicated while in other cases a Level 2 assessment was needed.

The positive attitude and resilience of the homeowners was heartening. They welcomed the arborist teams and told their stories of how their lives, homes, and property were affected by Hurricane Harvey. One woman described how at the beginning of the storm the winds were striking hard from the east—while Rockport was on the “dirty side” of the storm—then there was a total shift of the winds coming in from the west as the storm moved inland. And she told how during the next morning she and her husband had to cut a path through debris just to make it out of their yard. ►

**ISA Texas volunteers at Rockport:** *Kneeling:* Curtis Hopper, Armando Cortez, Bill Green, Mark Bird

*Standing:* Mike Sills, Justin Horwath, Mark Kalbfleisch, Colter Sonnevile, Mark Kroeze and son Cyrus, Bill McMenamin, Janie Quinonez McMenamin, Ralph Chiuminatta, Dawn Roth-Ehlinger, Steve Sills, Jacob West, Dayton Archer, Todd Cutting, Erick Palacios, Tyler Burkett, Gary Ripps, Leon Macha, Chris Lane, John Giedraitis, Ross Hosea

*Not pictured:* Erwin Castellanos, Micah Pace, Chad Simmons, Ginger Easton-Smith, Amy Burkett, Blanca Bolner-Bird, Jessica Waggoner, Melody Waggoner and Laura Clark



Photo by Amy Burkett



## ◀ Here's what some of our volunteers had to say:

"Seeing the Harvey damage first-hand reinforced the observation that you don't want to sit in place and ride out the storm.

Rockport citizens are clearly Texas Strong folks who are hard at work every day, aimed at putting this disaster experience behind them."

—Leon Macha, *Certi-Pro Horticulture, El Campo*

"The people there we talked to needed to be reminded that trees have been through this before and their forest canopy will return. There is hope. We ARE Texans and this is Texas. We look out for each other. "

—Curtis Hopper, *BCMA TX-3236B, aPerfectTree.com*

"It was very satisfying to answer one of the prominent cries the storm survivors are voicing . . . "What should I do about my tree?" They received us with open arms and attentive ears!"

—Mark Kalbfleisch, *Kalbfleisch & Sons Tree Service*

"Our volunteer effort was well worthwhile in my opinion. We helped some trees, we enlightened homeowners about proper tree care, and informed them of the ISA presence in their community. However, the main message turned out to be something different from the risk assessment that we were tasked with. Consistently for almost every property the message to homeowners in Rockport was 'Don't do anything now or for two years. Let these trees recover before any pruning.' Of course if we came across a risk situation that required immediate mitigation, that was addressed, but the bigger context was that these trees were severely stressed and needed every leaf and time to recover before any corrective pruning.

This is a lesson that could be applied every day wherever a tree is being considered for pruning. Ask before pruning "will this help or damage the tree's health or structure?"

In my everyday work most of the trees I see have been over-pruned or badly pruned. I cringe at the carnage of bad tree work the week prior to brush pickup. I would estimate that close to 90 percent of the tree work being done is unnecessary or inappropriate.

Most of this is being done by unqualified people but not all of it. Please don't be one of those guys!"

—Dayton Archer, *Tree Doctor, Inc.* ■



*From the top (photos by Micah Pace):*

Note stating "I want to talk with the arborist" left for volunteer team.

Destroyed palms in front of historic Fulton Mansion on the Gulf Coast.

Live oaks resprouting and recovering six months after the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey in August 2017.

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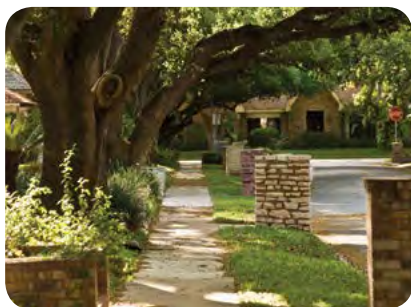
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## Professional Workshop Series

# ISA Texas Sponsors *Cranes and Trees* in Fort Worth

by Micah Pace, President, ISA Texas; Consulting Urban Forester; Arborist, Preservation Tree

On March 2, ISA Texas held the masters' level workshop *Cranes and Trees* at the Botanic Gardens and Trinity Park in Fort Worth. A huge thank you to our event chair Steve Driskill and co-chair Curtis Hopper for all their effort in developing a first-class event!

This one-day workshop was led by Mark Chisholm, working arborist, instructor and ISA world champion climber. It focused on practical and advanced rigging techniques, how to estimate log weight, and how to make proper cuts associated with removals and crane use. Students received expert instruction both in class at the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens Education Center and outdoors at Trinity Park where a tree removal demonstration was performed with the use of a crane.

In the dense Texas urban environment, both pruning and removals can, at times, be very complicated due to limited



Professional instructor Mark Chisholm performs the final removal cut of a 32-inch cedar elm in Trinity Park.

property access for specialized equipment and the heightened risk associated with the presence of high-value infrastructure as well as unaddressed defects in trees. That's what makes professional training so important.

ISA Texas' mission is to promote professional arboriculture through the education of both professional arborists and the general public. Come learn with us!

Visit our calendar (<http://isatexas.com/texas-chapter-isa-events/>) to choose an educational event near you or contact us online at <http://isatexas.com/contact/> or at [jpg@isatexas.com](mailto:jpg@isatexas.com) with any questions or to find out how you can get involved today. ■



Curtis Hopper, Markus Smith, Mark Chisholm, Jimmy Prichard, and Steve Driskill. Curtis, Markus, Jimmy and Steve served as ground crew for Mark during the outside demonstration.



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# 9th Annual Bilingual Tree Worker Training Covers Tree Care, Technology and Safety

by Mark Bird, City Arborist, San Antonio

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Bilingual Tree Care & Safety Training, sponsored by the San Antonio Arborist Association, was held at the Schertz Civic Center March 8. It offered a unique opportunity to bring together commercial and utility tree workers for more than just training. Not only did the presentations provide information on proper care and maintenance of trees and the importance of safety during all operations, it also exposed attendees to new technology and introduced changes in terminology for the industry. Presentations on “What is Safety? It’s a Culture” by Eduardo Medina, an internationally recognized trainer from Davey Tree Experts, and “Practical Pruning for Tree Care Workers” by Dr. Todd Watson gave excellent information and inspiration on being a tree care professional.

After a catered lunch of brisket, sausage and all the trimmings, the attendees were divided into groups to participate in outdoor demonstrations. (Doing outdoor demonstrations is an excellent way to keep people awake after a delicious and filling lunch!) Demonstrations on chainsaw safety by the Husqvarna team provided instruction on the safe operation of chainsaws on the ground and in the tree, and stressed the importance of always using proper PPE. Dr. Watson led demonstrations on structural pruning, with the assistance of Mark Duff for translations. These demonstrations reinforced the information covered in the morning practical pruning session. An excellent demonstration of SRT by Eduardo Medina gave many attendees a firsthand up-close view of a climbing system they have no experience with.

The San Antonio Arborist Association was formed to raise the standard of tree care in the San Antonio area by providing affordable high-level training opportunities to the tree worker community. The success of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tree Care & Safety Training shows there is an ongoing need to make these quality training opportunities available to our tree care professionals. ■



## Photos:

1. Dr. Todd Watson, assisted by Mark Duff, does a tree pruning demo
2. Eduardo Medina, Davey Tree Experts, does an SRT demo.

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# TTC: Where and When? Tree Conference Poll Results

by April Rose, ISA Texas board member

At the 2017 annual business meeting, held at the Texas Tree Conference in Waco, members discussed the best time for our statewide conference. Finding the best place and time of year to host nearly 1,000 attendees is no small feat! We consider many factors including the relative seasonal workload of Certified Arborists, costs at the host site, and the distance for attendees to travel.

As your elected board of directors we take every member concern seriously; to learn more about your preferences for the time of year and location of the tree conference we sent a survey to members.

Results include:

- 63% attended the 2017 conference.
- 82% plan to attend the 2018 conference.
- 43% selected September or October as the best time of year for the conference.

- 13% selected February as the best time.
- 32% would like to see the conference stay in Waco.
- 17% would like to see it move to the San Antonio area.
- 15% would like to see it move to the Austin area.

The plurality of members prefer the fall, so we don't anticipate changing the time of year. The primary barrier to changing location is cost, and the conference center and food costs in Waco are significantly lower than in other metro areas. Until we can identify a more competitively priced site than Waco we will stay there; if we moved, the registration costs would have to go up to offset increased expenses. We work hard to deliver a conference that is a relevant, affordable, accessible, and high quality.

If you have any suggestions on how we can improve the tree conference or any services please do not hesitate to let us know. Better yet, volunteer! Thank you. ■



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# A Cautionary Tale

by Greg David, RCA/BCMA

About 6:30 pm on May 30, 2014, a large branch fell and struck two-year-old Cody Barnes while he was playing at a park. Cody was rushed to the hospital and treated for brain trauma and a depressed skull fracture. He survived the incident, but will likely suffer from neurological deficits for the rest of his life.

Hackett Creek Homeowners Association had contracted with Barkley's Lawn Service for landscape maintenance at the park, and Barkley had subcontracted major tree work to Pike Tree Service, as needed.

About a month before the incident, an HOA board member met Mr. Barkley and Ms. Pike at the park to obtain a bid to remove some deadwood and a few long limbs that overhung a swing set situated about fifty feet from where Cody was hurt. That work was approved by the HOA and quickly completed.

After Cody's injury, his family sued Barkley, Pike, and the

Figure 1. Subject ash showing recently broken stub. Note climber for scale.



HOA for negligence and failure to maintain the park in a safe manner. The main arboricultural components of the case involved determining the cause of the branch failure and researching the standard of care for maintenance of the trees in the park.

The subject branch attached to the tree trunk about forty-five feet above grade, and the branch had broken about seven feet out from the trunk. Dimensional analysis techniques were used on police photographs of the branch lying on the ground (the branch had long since been removed) in order to determine that the overall length of the branch was approximately thirty-three feet prior to failure—with a taper factor of 62:1. (*See figures 1 and 2.*)

Close examination of the break interface (*see figure 3*) revealed that woody tissues on the top side of the branch had recently died at the point where the branch failed. Incipient decay had produced a smooth “brash” break in the upper third of the branch, which contrasted sharply with the fibrous, stranded breaks seen in living and non-decaying woody tissues found in the lower two-thirds of the break cross-section.

Ash wood is known to be strong in tension and weak in compression, so any defect on the top side of a branch would usually be more of a concern than a similar dead spot on the underside of a branch. Much of the testimony by the various experts in the case centered around what could have been seen by an arborist standing on the ground, and whether or not the limb failure might have been a case of “sudden branch drop.”

Although research regarding “sudden branch drop” is incomplete, a few trends appear to be emerging in the literature:

1. Certain trees, including ash, cottonwood, elm, oak, and others, are prone to sudden branch drop.
2. Branch failures typically occur at a point a few feet out from the trunk.
3. Failures often occur late in the afternoon, and often on windless days.
4. Failures often occur a day or two following a rain, presumably due to the propagation of micro-cracks as woody tissues rehydrate at different rates.

The area was in a “severe” drought at the time of the incident, and weather records from nearby airports indicated that an average of a quarter inch of rain fell in the area two days prior to the incident. Winds were reportedly light that day.

Although opposing tree experts all agreed that the dead spot on the branch could not have been seen from the ground, the plaintiff pointed out that the limb's overall length, horizontal orientation, poor weight distribution, and poor taper factor should have been readily evident from the ground. ►



- Arboricultural textbooks state that branches with taper factors exceeding 50:1 may be at increased risk of failure.

In Texas courts, an “act of God” is defined as an inevitable accident that cannot be prevented by human actions or foresight. Although all experts agreed that the incident *could* have been a case of “sudden branch drop,” plaintiff asserted that failure of the poorly-tapered limb was predictable, and, since ash trees are known to be susceptible to sudden branch drop, a prudent and reasonable arborist would have recommended shortening or removing the limb over the playset prior to the incident. As a predictable failure, the incident could not be described, from a legal standpoint, as an “act of God.”

The second phase of the case dealt with the standard of care and the duty to notify the HOA of the potential hazard. ISA’s *Arborists’ Certification Training Guide* points out this duty in a straightforward way:

### Liability and Negligence

Arborists must understand the responsibility that accompanies tree risk assessment. Because they are considered experts in the care of trees, arborists can be held to a higher standard for inspecting and recognizing hazards and assessing risk in trees, *even if they were hired for purposes other than tree risk assessment*. It is important to document any potential hazards and risk levels that are discovered, to provide information to the clients or property managers, and to maintain good records.

In this case, it was argued that both Barkley’s Lawn Service and Pike Tree Service failed to meet the standard of care in a number of ways. As an experienced landscape professional, Mr. Barkley knew, or should have known, the right questions to ask when he was tasked with finding a tree service subcon-

tractor for the park. The HOA board member stated, in his deposition, that he relied on both Mr. Barkley and Ms. Pike for recommendations regarding tree safety during their walkthrough of the park on April 23, one month prior to the incident. Plaintiff argued that Barkley’s Lawn Service failed in its obligation of due diligence, both to its client and to the public at large, with regard to ensuring a safe environment at the park.

It was also clear, from deposition testimony, that Ms. Pike was untrained and unaware of many of the most crucial elements of tree safety. She failed to point out a number of hazardous tree issues that should have been clearly visible during the walkthrough of the park in April, including a codominant ash tree with basal decay near the sandbox, large deadwood in a boxelder near the creek, a hollow and decaying boxelder tree over a picnic table, extensive decay in a red oak northwest of the slide, and, of course, the long, poorly tapered limb that fell and injured Cody.

Plaintiff’s attorneys argued that, by failing to educate themselves on tree hazard identification, and by failing to take the time to look around the park for obvious tree hazards while they were in the park a month prior to the incident, both Mr. Barkley and Ms. Pike had failed to meet the standard of care.

Since all three defendants settled prior to trial, this case won’t set any type of legal precedent in Texas. Perhaps it should, however, serve to remind us all about a potential legal risk that we, as tree care professionals, often face on a daily basis.

Although the standard of care does not require that we perform formal tree risk assessments on every property we visit, we are expected to know how to identify tree hazards, and, we are expected to keep our eyes open, have a good look around, and report any hazards that we do observe.



Figure 2. Police photo showing the branch on the ground.

Greg David is a Board-Certified Master Arborist and Registered Consulting Arborist based in Muenster, Texas. Names in this article have been changed to protect privacy. ■



Figure 3. Police photo showing the broken end of the branch. Note the fibrous break on the underside and the brash break on the upper side.



# Oak wilt fungus has a new name

by Rebecca Johnson, ISA Texas Editor, Arborholic LLC

What's Up Doc is on hold this issue, but stay tuned for the June issue when we solve "The Case of the Diseased

Bay Laurel." Meanwhile, we have an update on oak wilt.



The oak tree on the left is showing oak wilt symptoms, while the oak on the right is healthy. Photo by Gene Gehring.

For many years, the oak wilt fungus has been considered atypical compared to other species in the *Ceratocystis* genus, but it didn't fit into the other genera in the Ceratocystidaceae family. After DNA testing, taxonomists decided to break it out into its own genus, *Bretziella*, named after Theodore W. Bretz, who first discovered and described the sexual state of the type species of this genus. The new scientific name for oak wilt is *Bretziella fagacearum*. You can read more at <https://mycokeys.pensoft.net/article/20657/>.

As you know, ISA Texas offers an Oak Wilt Qualification. If you're not yet qualified, mark your calendars for the next workshops coming this summer. (Check out the Events listings on page 14). Become Oak Wilt Qualified this year and be part of the cadre saving Texas' oaks. ■

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# Tyler Arbor Day

The City of Tyler held their annual Arbor Day on the University of Texas at Tyler campus (which just received Tree Campus USA status for 2017). The event was held January 27 and had over 1200 people in attendance.

During the registration activities, there were games for children of all ages as well as a trade show showing different green industry items. Vendors came from as far as Iowa to showcase their products.

There were over 50 sponsors for Arbor Day, which raised over \$30,000. This amount covered the event in its entirety, so the city's budget was not affected. A total of 113 trees were planted in various locations all over campus. ISA Texas was there with a booth providing expert arboriculture advice. (Pictured in the bottom photo are ISA Texas President Micah Pace and Ken Smith, both of Preservation Tree).

The City of Tyler is very thankful to all of the sponsors and volunteers who made this event possible and one to remember. ■



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Photos by Zaina Gates.

# EVENTS

*April 13 & 14*

## **Sun Country Landscape Conference: "Plant it Forward, Plant a Tree!"**

Tech20 Center, El Paso

Speakers include entomologists, landscape specialists, state climatologists, and plant pathologists. Sponsored by West Texas Urban Forestry Council.

<http://bit.ly/SunCountry2018>

*April 19*

## **Caring for our Senior Trees Workshop – Houston**

This Masters' Series workshop will help you understand how trees age and will teach the specialized skills required to maintain mature trees.

<http://bit.ly/SrTreesHouston>

*April 20*

## **Caring for our Senior Trees Workshop – San Antonio**

This Masters' Series workshop will help you understand how trees age and will teach the specialized skills required to maintain mature trees.

<http://bit.ly/SrTreesSA>

*May 1*

## **ISA Certified Arborist, Utility Specialist, And Municipal Specialist Exam**

Amarillo College downtown, Amarillo

Enrollment deadline: April 13

Seats Available: 25

<http://bit.ly/2018AmarilloExams>

*May 1*

## **Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) Renewal– College Station**

The TRAQ Renewal Course is a one-day refresher, with five hours of instruction, and three hours to take the exam. Current TRAQ holders can complete the course as early as 3 ½ years into their qualification (18 months before your expiration date). If you attended the July 2013 event, you will need to register for this renewal. If you received your qualification before November 2014 you can register for this renewal.

<http://bit.ly/TRAQRenewCS>

*May 2*

## **Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ)–College Station**

A two-day educational course followed by a half-day assessment that includes both a written and field component. Your instructor will be Skip Kincaid.

<http://bit.ly/2018TRAQCS>

*May 7 & 14, June 4 & 11*

## **Certified Arborist Exam Prep Course, Austin**

Preparing to take the Certified Arborist Exam? Join this class in Austin for instruction and preparation help. Discount for people who live or work within the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area.

<http://bit.ly/AustinCAP20181>

*May 10–11*

## **Oak Wilt Qualification Course and Assessment – Temple**

Tentatively scheduled for May 10-11 in the Temple area. Make sure you are signed up for the ISAT TreEmail newsletter to stay informed.

<http://bit.ly/2018OWQ1>

*May 10*

## **The 4th Annual Growing Texas Workshop: Stormwater Sustainability & Riparian Restoration**

Confluence Park in San Antonio

<http://bit.ly/4thGrowingTX>

*May 17–19*

## **2018 Texas Tree Climbing Championship**

Getzendaner Park, Waxahachie

Come to Waxahachie and see if you have what it takes to be the next Texas Tree Climbing Champion! Or just come and enjoy watching the competition.

<http://bit.ly/2018TTCC>

*June 14–15*

## **Oak Wilt Qualification Course and Assessment – Fredericksburg**

Tentatively set for June 14-15. Make sure you are signed up for the ISAT TreEmail newsletter to get more details.

<http://bit.ly/2018OWQ2>

*August 5–8*

## **ISA Annual International Conference and Trade Show, Columbus, Ohio**

A forum for the exchange of information, and opportunities to network with others in the arboricultural profession. The event provides a lineup of educational sessions led by industry leaders from around the world.

<http://bit.ly/2018ISACnf>

*September 26–28*

## **38th Texas Tree Conference, Waco Convention Center, Waco**

Conference, trade show, academy, tree school, and membership meeting. Texas, national and international speakers, plus tracks for commercial, municipal and utility arborists. Plenty of time to socialize, network, and visit the exhibits.

<http://bit.ly/2018TTC>

*October 19-21*

## **Texas Women's Tree Climbing Workshop**

Mark your calendars now for the second annual Texas Women's Climbing Workshop.

<http://bit.ly/2018TXWTCW>



## NEW MEMBERS

Patrick Cooper	Telferner
Dawn Garner	Dallas
Don Garner	Dallas
David Gomez	Mckinney
Jose Angel Guerra	Eagle Pass
Elias Guerrero	Horseshoe Bay
Rhett Hafkesbring	Fort Worth
Jason Hightower	Nacogdoches
Mark Johanningsmeier	San Antonio
David B. Kelley	Winters
John Lamb	Houston
Simon David Loose	Dallas
Stephen Brent Mackey	Clyde
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## Editor's Note

*Rebecca Johnson*



Welcome to April! I hope the winter treated you all very well. It's been a busy couple of months for ISA Texas and our members – we all jumped right into 2018 with both feet.

We recently celebrated International Women's Day on March 8. Arboriculture and forestry have long been a male dominated industry, but women are finding their place. We're up to seven women on the ISA Texas board (just over 40%) and it's been a pleasure to serve with so many capable women, but several are coming to the end of their terms and may not run again. In the last few years there are more and more women showing up at workshops and events and taking on leadership positions. We still have a long ways to go – we still don't have a line for the women's restroom like you'll find at almost every other public event (including sporting events) – but we're getting there.

What can you do? Encourage women to join and stay in the profession. Provide cross training – sales and production – for both the women and men on your crew. Support outreach efforts like the Women's Tree Climbing Workshop. Encourage strong, effective women to run for the board (research shows that women in leadership positions have a direct impact on other women joining and/or staying in the industry). And when you have women on your staff/board don't overload them with administrative tasks so that they burn out quickly. Together we can create a workforce that matches the demographics in the US.



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## Ascent Ergonomics

My observations over 40 years in this business tell me that while most climbers in Texas are certainly able to get up and down a good number of trees on a daily basis, many really are not doing so in a way that will minimize the risk of so-called musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs). According to OSHA, MSDs are a leading cause of lost work hours in America, which, like most other federal government information, probably comes as no surprise to anyone, but you're supposed to make references like that when starting an article like this.

In this piece, I'd like to appeal to both climbers and their supervisors to improve worker ergonomics and efficiency, specifically in regard to ascent. In my opinion, the short- and long-term benefits will include: reduced risk of sprains and strains and their associated loss of work time, reduced risk of

permanent joint damage, reduced fatigue and its associated risk of accidents, increased production, and improved work quality. Pretty good list, right?

Ascents are the part of the climb that take the most energy on a per minute basis, but if a climber spends hours in a tree after ascending, it is not a significant portion of the day's total energy expenditure. However, if the day involves climbing multiple trees, spending maybe just 30 minutes in each one as a common example, the ascents become a much larger percentage of both the time and energy spent in a day. Multiplied by years, the wear and tear on joints and the increased probability for accidents due to fatigue both become much greater if these ascents not done efficiently. Here are some ways to improve ascent efficiency and/or ergonomics.

**Efficient body thrusting:** Some might say that there is no such thing as efficient body thrusting, but for an ascent on a leaning tree in which your feet are in contact with the trunk, this can be an efficient technique. However, I usually see this technique used on "open air" ascents (feet are not in contact with the tree), with no assist devices. I see this so frequently that I wonder if it isn't the norm (at least in central Texas), and I'd have to call it the worst way to ascend a tree. The amount of energy used, all of it coming from the arms, is far greater than with other ascents. If you are going to do an "open-air" body thrust, there are many ways it can be made easier and more efficient.

First and foremost, **use a friction saver** (see photo). This advice can apply to climbing in general, but is especially apt for body thrusting. This removes so much friction during the ascent that it *almost* makes body thrusting a pleasure. *Almost*. Friction savers must be installed from the ground to be of benefit on ascent. This is not too difficult to learn, but it does require a wide open branch union for the rings to pass through. This provides **essential** protection for the tree as well. *A single body-thrust ascent without a friction saver on a thin-barked tree like a sycamore will cause severe damage. You must **always** use one on thin-barked stems.*

One of the big problems with body thrusting is that in most cases it is done entirely with the arms. By not using your legs, you are leaving your biggest muscles out of the equation. Why? You can use your legs when body thrusting by simply ►



Adjustable friction saver.



◀ footlocking the falling end of the line to assist with the ascent. It's difficult to footlock just a single line however, and it is awfully slow. A much more efficient way to engage a leg on body thrust is to use a foot ascender. Because this is a very asymmetrical technique (uses one leg vs. two), the body mechanics are not great, which can cause its own problems if done long term, but it's much easier than footlocking the tail.

The best way to body thrust (again, if you must) is to use some type of "sliding bridge" technique (along with a friction saver). This technique was first written about nationally by trainer/ author/ arborist Mark Adams back in 2001. There are many variations of the technique, some less efficient than others. I prefer the one shown in the photo at the right. What it does is allow the distance from your climbing knot to your D-ring to be adjusted. By making it longer during the ascent, you can keep your hands below the climbing knot and get a full long pull stroke with your arms and the knot automatically advances. Upon completion of the ascent, the system is slid back to its work position.

**Footlocking:** Unless you are "trunk walking," I'd avoid body thrust altogether. In my opinion, the very low tech footlock is far more efficient, because you are using both legs and the body is more upright. This saves energy vs. using only your arms in a standard body thrust, and also increases the length of each "stroke" or "bight." You also are moving up the doubled line in a direct 1:1 ratio. In body thrusting, the distance travelled is half the amount of rope pulled.

The footlock is not without its problems, however. You still need to use plenty of arm strength, and if done with improper body mechanics, it can lead to problems in pretty much every joint of the body from wrist to ankles. Overextending the arms, putting the knees too far out to the sides, and deviating the wrists too much are all form flaws to avoid. Intense strain from gripping is another negative associated with footlock. A good way around this problem is using a double-handled ascender. They come in three different alignment angles and provide very secure, user-friendly grips. This also addresses the notoriously finicky prusik knot, which often does not grip the line perfectly.

**SRT:** Of course the newest advance in climbing is single rope technique. Although it seems like nationally its popularity is hitting the exponential phase, that does not seem to be happening in Texas. And in my opinion, this is where climbers



A version of the sliding bridge setup.

can make the biggest reductions in climbing-related MSDs. Converting to SRT ascents about five years ago has added years to my career, by saving lots of wear and tear on my joints, and greatly decreasing the energy I use to get through an average day. This ascent is very ergonomic. The body and limbs are at very natural angles, and almost all lift force comes from the legs. In form it is very similar to climbing a ladder. It is vastly superior to the footlock and body thrust for long term use.

One of the large benefits of SRT is that it does not require both parts of the line to be "isolated" (next to each other for the entire distance from the installation point) in order to ascend, as is the case with footlock and body thrust. This can be a huge time saver. SRT also allows for basal anchoring (securing one end of the line at the ground). This facilitates ground-based rescues; a major safety advantage.

**More training is required** for SRT than the other two techniques, to fully understand how its additional components are combined and how they work, as well as the additional forces SRT can put on the climbing system and tree. *Without this knowledge, there is a greater risk of falling while using SRT.* But there are some simplified versions available now that are very user friendly, compact and inexpensive, yet still safe. I strongly urge those using inefficient body thrust or even footlock techniques to **make an investment in their own health** by thoroughly learning the proper use of SRT.

*The author is the owner and operator of Arbor Vitae Tree Care in Austin. He has 38 years of climbing experience and is available for worker safety and tree care workshops. He may be reached at 512-301-8700.* ■



... to start thinking  
about what  
to donate  
to this year's  
silent auction!

Spring is springing so it's a good time to start thinking about the silent auction, since I know you will be hard at work cleaning out your closets! Last year's silent auction at the Texas Tree Conference was a great success: 70 items were donated, and I am proud to report that we raised nearly \$6,000.

As usual, our members, exhibitors and sponsors came through with flying colors by providing a range of power tools, hand tools, a smoker, a toolbox full of PPE, books, training resources, and much more. Husqvarna's electric chainsaw raised the most money, and Stihl's donation of a kid's toy blower backpack and toy chainsaw had the most number of bids.

If you have something you would like to donate please don't be shy. Even small items like a book, a bottle of wine or a gift card can be grouped together to make a really nice gift basket. I personally contributed by making stationary and donating a few items from my jewelry box. Family friendly items are especially desirable so attendees can knock out a little holiday shopping at the conference.

If you would like to help with the silent auction in 2018, start thinking now about what you can donate or connections you have with potential donors such as hunting or fishing businesses, owners of timeshares, or staffers at family entertainment venues like Schlitterbahn. Please contact me ([aprilrose@gmail.com](mailto:aprilrose@gmail.com)) if you have questions about eligible donations or want to help me reach out to exhibitors and sponsors for donation requests. Let's make this year's silent auction the best one yet! Thank you.

—April Rose, ISA Texas board member

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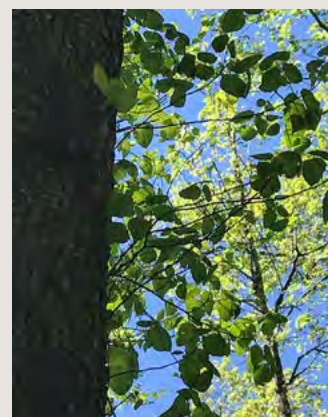
## What's the Big **ID**ea?

### Can you identify this Texas tree?



If you know this tree, look for the photo on our Facebook page and correctly identify it in the comment section under the photo, using the full scientific name and one or more common names. If you don't know it, check the page for an answer in a few days. The winner gets bragging rights and the chance to submit a tree to stump fellow arborists in the April issue. Photo submitted by John Warner.

### February winner



Last issue's winner was Morgan Menefee, Associate Director of Facilities Services at Mountain View College. Morgan correctly identified Black Tupelo/Black Gum, *Nissa sylvatica*.