



# The Prairie Arborist

*The Official Publication of the ISA Prairie Chapter Issue 3 2019*



Photo by Ester Martens  
Elbow Saskatchewan



Mimi Cole President

M.J. "Mimi" Cole,  
I.S.A. Prairie chapter President

Wow!

Where does time go? Kids are back in school, fall recreation programs & sports start up, and another summer is in the

books. The mornings are certainly darker.

It was a busy month in August for the Chapter, with the TCC in Lethbridge, closely followed by a workshop in Calgary. Thank you to everyone who helped, participated, and spectated, as well as to all of our generous sponsors. The volunteer base of this chapter never ceases to amaze me...folks just pitch right in and give their all to make these events run!!

Once again, a big thank you to our own Keith Anderson. And congratulations to Toni-Marie, our Alberta director, on the birth of a splendid baby boy, Declan...a future climber, fir sure!

Conference is just around the corner, in High River. There will also be a TPAQ course offered at the same time, so good idea to get your registrations in early.

At this time, as my term as president winds down, I'd like to thank the membership for the privilege of serving in this capacity - believe me, it has been my pleasure. I would like to thank Bonnie Fermanuik for stepping into the Vice-president slot and know she'll bring strong leadership to the Chapter, as President like she has in the past.

Be safe all!!



Check out the newly created Manitoba Urban Forest Council (MBUFC)!

The Manitoba Urban Forest Council is a non-profit organization with a mission to protect,

maintain, and enhance urban forests by promoting arboricultural best practices, safe work, professional development, information sharing, and networking in Manitoba.

The Council was formed by several individuals from various sectors of the urban forest industry who identified the need for a collective organization to represent urban forestry in Manitoba, and to connect people and combine efforts in protecting and enhancing our urban forests.

The Council represents urban forestry for municipalities, urban forestry professionals, educational institutions, and arboriculture- and urban forestry-related industries across the province. It is governed by a set of by-laws and is currently run by the founding Board of Directors. Our inaugural workshop is being held October 3rd in Morden Manitoba

For more information about the MBUFC, please visit the website at [www.mbufc.ca](http://www.mbufc.ca) and watch for future announcements.



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## Save the Date The Prairie Chapter Annual Conference



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Finding the cure

### "URBANITIS" Finding the Cure

Will be in  
High River  
October 28, 29

Register at  
[www.isaprairie.com](http://www.isaprairie.com)



## Save the Date

The next written  
**Certification Exam**  
in the Prairie  
Chapter will be at the  
Conference  
in High River on  
October 27

[www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Exam-Information](http://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/Exam-Information)

## Save the Date

**SOLD OUT**

Don't miss

### ASCA's Tree and Plant Appraisal Qualification (TPAQ)

October 28 & 29 High River

There are still a few spots available

Register at [www.isaprairie.com](http://www.isaprairie.com)



## Save the Date

Watch this spot for the next

**Tree Risk Assessment (TRAQ) Workshop and TRAQ Renewal**

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  - Scouting for Pests in the Landscape w/ Ken Fry
- Soil Reports: How to Read and Adjust a Client's Property w/ Bill Peregrine
- The Best Tree Planting Guide w/ Darby McGrath
  - and more...

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**REGISTER ONLINE: [www.greenindustryshow.com](http://www.greenindustryshow.com)**

## Why not consider a position on the Prairie Chapter Board?

The Prairie Chapter is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors, many of whom have served for several years. To keep the Prairie Chapter viable, current and meaningful, new Board members from different sectors of the industry need to get involved.

The Board is made up of:

- President:** Mimi Cole
- Vice President:** Bonnie Fermanuik
- Secretary Treasurer:** Jean Mathieu Daoust
- Manitoba Director:** Matt Vinet
- Saskatchewan Director:** Derek Barr
- Alberta Director:** Toni Marie Newsham
- Alberta Director at Large:** Troy Miller

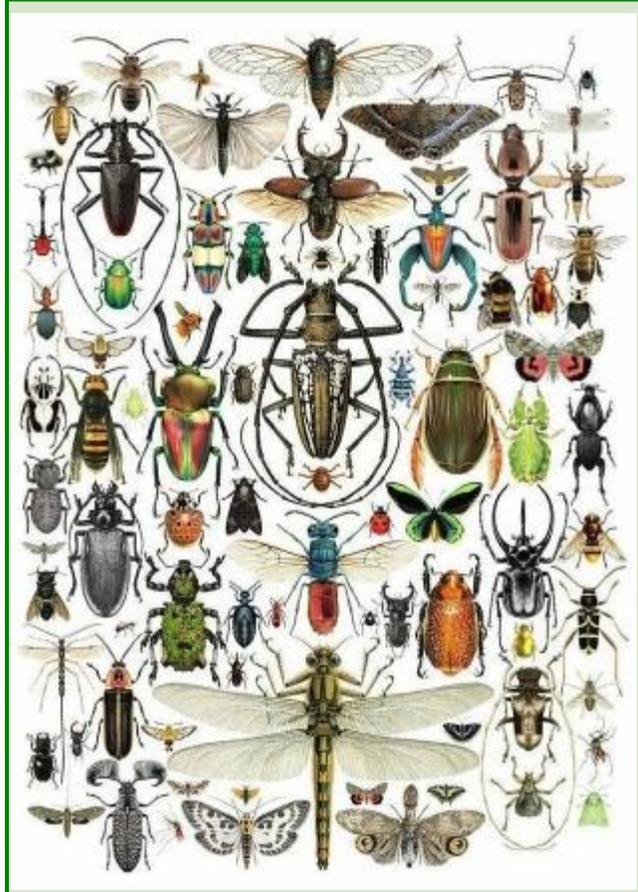
## What's Involved?

The Board meets face to face twice per year. Once at the annual Chapter conference and once in January to establish goals and budgets for the year. Other than that, the Board meets by conference call once per month for an hour or less.

## Will I have out of pocket expenses to participate on the Board?

No, all meeting expenses are reimbursed by the Chapter and, Board members attend the annual conference for half price.

Elections are held at the AGM with the annual conference.  
 Need more information? Contact Keith at the Prairie Chapter office 866-550-7464



The Obvious and not so Obvious Pollinators

from Facebook Rafael Hernandez

## Help keep Alberta Dutch Elm Disease free.

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The elm bark beetle, which transports the DED fungus, is attracted to fresh wounds on elm trees. The Alberta elm pruning ban prohibits pruning when the beetles are most active.

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## There are some great reasons to attend the 2019 Prairie Chapter Conference October 28,29 in High River, Alberta

**Leonard Burkhardt Jr.** Leonard F. Burkhardt, Jr. Ph.D., is a horticulturist, with degrees in Botany, Agronomy, and Horticulture. His responsibilities include arboricultural and horticultural consulting, research, and science advising for The Davey Tree Expert Company in the Western Canada and West-

ern U.S. Dr. Burkhardt joined Davey in 1991. Prior to joining Davey, he was a re-

search and teaching assistant at the University of Illinois. He has more



**URBANITIS**  
*finding the cure*

than twenty-five years of experience teaching horticulture and weed science. Dr. Burkhardt is a member of the Inter-

national Society of Arboriculture (ISA), Western Chapter-ISA, Pesticide Applicators Professional Association (PAPA), and the PLANET Representative for the Council for Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CTLA).



**Chris Fields-Johnson**

Dr. Chris Fields-Johnson attended Virginia Tech, graduated

*(Continued on page 6)*

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(Continued from page 5)

Summa Cum Laude in forestry and received a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences while studying land reclamation, reforestation and the use of biochar in soil rehabilitation.

He is Technical Advisor for the Davey Institute of the Davey Tree Expert Company, providing technical support in the region from New York City to Atlanta.

### Marianne Waindle



After joining Arborjet in 2014, Marianne has used her 35-plus years in the green industry to bring her many talents to the team. As Technical Product

Manager, Marianne provides technical support to the Sales and Research & Development teams. She has a hand in new product development decisions, and assists Marketing with creating regional sales documents.

She earned her Bachelor of Science and Arts degree in Ornamental Horticulture/Plant Pathology, followed by her Master of Plant Protection and Pest Management (IPM in Plant Pathology/Entomology/Agronomy). She later joined the Davey Tree Expert Company, where she became an ISA Certified Arborist and began a lifelong career in tree health. Marianne also holds certification as a California Pest Control Advisor and licensed Pesticide Applicator. In her spare time, Marianne enjoys old house maintenance, gardening, horseback riding, and cooking with friends.

**Dr. Tom Smiley** is a senior arboricultural researcher at the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories in Charlotte, North Carolina, and an adjunct professor of urban forestry at Clemson

University. Dr. Smiley is active in the arboricul-



ture industry and has co-authored many of ISA's Best Management Practices.

His research has lead

to improved methods of increasing sidewalk longevity near trees, protecting trees from lightning damage, improving tree root growth, and reducing tree risk.

### Jacque Randle

Jacque is a local ISA Certified Arborist specializing in Plant Health Care, insect and disease diagnostics, pruning, planting and tree assessment, appraisals

Jacque Authored and published two



books – Insects-An Arborists Field Guide to Identification and Damage and What's Infesting my Trees. Both books are used as a reference in the industry and as in-

struction manuals for training purposes.

She is the owner and operator of Randle Handles Horticulture Ltd., a consulting and landscape design and maintenance business operating out of High River

**Bob Ermter** - Westcan Seeds Ltd Bio, studied Horticulture in the early 60's from the Ontario Agriculture College in Guelph Ontario; now called the University of Guelph; Business planning and management from the Mount Royal College, as

well special courses from the Olds Agricultural College.



Have worked in the Horticultural industry since the early 60's Developed the "Nutra-Leaf" brand of water soluble fertilizers to be used for ground injection in 1983.

### Anita Schill

The first Tree and Plant Appraisal Qualification (TPAQ) in the Prairie Chapter (and the second one in Canada) is being held at the same time as our conference. This Sold Out workshop is being taught by ASCA instructor and long time Prairie Chapter member Anita Schill.

Anita is the owner of Tree & Leaf, Inc., an arboriculture consulting company since 1995. She received a BSc in Plant Science from the University



of Alberta in 1979, followed by a BEd in Vocational Education. Anita was a permanent instructor of Arboriculture

and Landscape Horticulture at Olds College, Olds, Alberta, for 23 years. Anita has made presentations at various conferences including the ISA Prairie Chapter and ASCA, encompassing various arboriculture topics.

Anita is a professional agrologist (P.Ag.), a ASCA registered consulting arborist (#421), an ISA certified arborist, tree risk assessment qualified and an instructor of the tree and plant appraisal qualification (TPAQ).



2019 ISA Prairie Chapter Conference  
 Urbanitis – Finding the Cure  
 October 28th – October 29th, 2019  
 Heritage Inn, High River AB



Monday		Tuesday	
Time			
7:30	<b>Registration and Breakfast</b>		<b>Breakfast</b>
8:15 - 8:30	<b>Greetings and Welcome</b>		<b>Announcements</b>
8:30	Urbanitis - Tree Protection and Preservation Chris Fields-Johnson, Davey Institute		Managing Root Growth in the Urban Environment Dr Tom Smiley Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories
10:00			
10:00-10:30	<b>Coffee</b>		<b>Coffee</b>
10:30 - 11:30	Panel Discussion - Tree Protection Policy and Bylaws. Cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg		Getting it right, Green Side Up BMP Tree Planting Dr Len Burkhart, Davey Institute
11:30 - 12:30	Managing Trees near Constuction- BMP Dr Tom Smiley Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories		Unravelling the Mystery of Trees Bob Ermtter, Westcan Seeds
12:30 - 1:30	<b>Lunch</b>		<b>Lunch</b>
1:30 - 2:30	Reconnecting Trees to Soils in Our Landscapes Chris Fields - Johnson, Davey Institute		Communicate with Clarity, Get Accountability Speaker TBA
2:30 - 3:00	City of Edmonton Community Tree Planting Initiatives - Catherine Falk		New BMP Pruning - Third Edition Highlights Dr Len Burkhart, Davey Institute
3:00 - 3:30	<b>Coffee</b>		<b>Coffee</b>
3:30 - 4:30	The Big, the Bad, the Ugly Pest and Disease Watch Jacquie Randle		The New and Improved Pest Management Tools in Canada Marianne Waindle, Arborjet
4:30 - 5:00	High River's High River-Flood Response and Tree Preservation Plan-Speaker TBA		<b>Conference Wrap up - Head Home</b>
5:30 PM	Prairie Chapter AGM 5:15 - 6:00		
6:00 - 9:00			
6:00 - 11pm	<b>Arbor Fest</b>		





**Prairie Chapter Tree Climbing Championships (PCTCC)**

This year in beautiful Kinsmen park in Lethbridge Alberta.. Fantastic weather made this a great event. With just over 30 competitors; travelling from 3 provinces to compete, hang out, drink beer, eat food and all the things one does at a Prairie TCC. Of course, the winners get brag-

ging rights and a trophy and a chainsaw and a bunch of cool toys.... and... a trip to Albuquerque, New Mexico!!

Again, the weather, and some great trees were the story here.

Second year of the brand new Ascent event -no more footlocking ...unless you really want to...I think maybe a couple competitors did? Yay!

Great job to Jesse Antonation of Trilogy Tree, Maurice Pilotte of Petzl and Charlene Scott the head Judge of the event for doing a most wonderful job of organizing the 2<sup>nd</sup> ascent workshop and explaining and demonstrating the complexities of new event

Some of us old timers are sad to see the footlock disappear, but new technologies and are the way of the future. Charlene Scott must be given the dedication and patience award to agreeing to be the first head judge of this event. I think all competitors would agree she did a marvelous job ensuring this new event ran seamlessly (well almost)

The Work Climb also had a new twist, no ride in the bucket to the top, climbers had to reach the top on their own, to start this event. First, ascend a Green Ash then traverse over to the Elm to start. Good job Yannick on the great setup with this.

The preliminary events went off great, beautiful day, great crowds, great setting in the park, even a wedding right amongst us!

**Preliminary events results:**

**WOMEN**

**Aerial Rescue**

- 1 Jordyn Dyck
- 2 Ruth Maendel
- 3 Whitney Renney

**Belayed Speed Climb**

- 1 Whitney Renney
- 2 Jordyn Dyck
- 3 Ruth Maendel

**Ascent Event**

- 1 Jordyn Dyck
- 2 Ruth Maendel
- 3 Whitney Renney

**Throwline**

- 1 Jordyn Dyck
- 2 Ruth Maendel
- 3 Whitney Renney

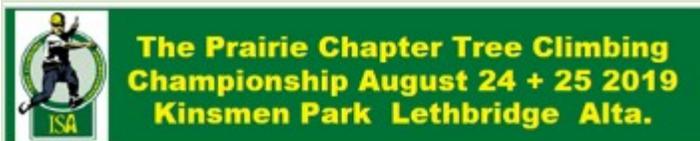
**Work Climb**

- 1 Ruth Maendel
- 2 Whitney Renney
- 3 Jordyn Dyck



**Overall Women's Ranking**

- 1 Jordyn Dyck
- 2 Ruth Maendel
- 3 Whitney Renney



**Saturday August 24 - Day One**  
**Preliminary Events 9 am – 5 pm**

Work climb: Contestants climb to five stations in a tree, performing a different task at each station.

Aerial rescue: Contestants reach and safely lower an injured climber (actually a life-sized mannequin).

Throwline: Tests contestants' ability to accurately place lines 30 - 60 feet up in a tree.

Belayed speed climb: Contestants ascend a predetermined route from ground to about 60 feet.

Ascent Event: Measures climbers ability to perform a 50-foot + vertical ascent.

**Sunday August 25 - Day Two**  
**Masters Challenge 10:00 AM -2:30 PM**

The Masters' Challenge is the championship round of the competition. The top men and top women finishers from the preliminary round advance to the Masters' Challenge to compete for the title.



## MEN

### Aerial Rescue

- 1 Jesse Antonation
- 2 DJ Neustaeter
- 3 Rob Knight

### Belayed Speed Climb

- 1 DJ Neustaeter
- 2 Colton Miller
- 3 Jesse Antonation

### Ascent Event

- 1 Jesse Antonation
- 2 DJ Neustaeter
- 3 Joel Miller

### Throwline

- 1 Joey Sullivan
- 2 Joel Miller
- 3 Justin Schaffer

### Work Climb

- 1 Jesse Antonation
- 2 DJ Neustaeter
- 3 Joey Sullivan

### Overall Men's Ranking

- 1 DJ Neustaeter
- 2 Jesse Antonation
- 3 Joey Sullivan
- 4 Joel Miller
- 5 Rob Knight
- 6 Peter LaRue

## Day 2

Another beautiful day for the Master's Challenge. A big old Cottonwood, and a very challenging master's climb. Some very exciting and tense moments, and a big disappointment for DJ Neustaeter who was sadly disqualified for dropping a piece of equipment from the tree.

In the end, the travellers heading to the ITCC in Albuquerque, New Mexico representing the Prairie Chapter will be:

**Jordyn Dyck & Jesse Antonation**

This will be Jesse's 7th trip to the Internationals and Jordyn's second. A true triumph for Trilogy Tree Service as they are both from that local Winnipeg Company.

Good luck to you both!

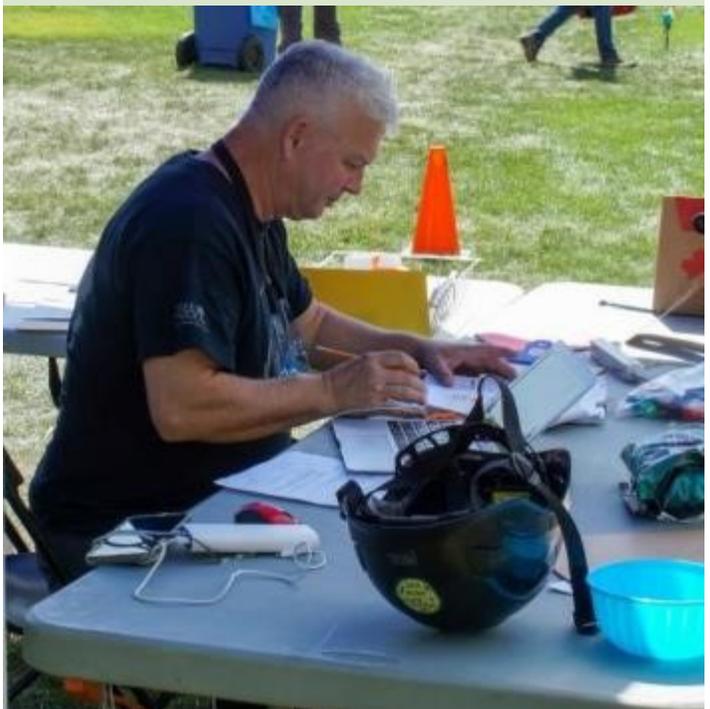
### Masters Challenge Results

#### Men's

- 1 Jesse Antonation
  - 2 Joey Sullivan
  - 3 Joel Miller
- DJ Neustaeter: DQ

#### Women's

- 1st Jordyn Dyck
- 2 Ruth Maendel







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*(Continued from page 9)*

\*Special mention must go to competitor #20; Dave Lutes who was competing in his 20th competition...at the ripe old age of 57! He did it all without any special assistance or aids!

### Thanks to all our volunteers

We'd like to thank everyone who helped out in one way or another. It would not be done without all your tireless efforts. If we've forgotten anyone we're truly sorry, remember these are old and tired minds at work here, we can't remember what day it is....

All the climbers and techs who helped out especially those from out of town:

Yanick Portauw All the way from Belgium, by way of B.C.

Maurice Pilotte: All the way from Quebec!

Dwayne Neustaeter: All the way from Olds!

Charlene Scott: All the way from Olds!  
Gerard Fournier: All the way from Didsbury!

Cody Anderson: By way of Calgary!  
Mike Tilford: All the way from Colorado

Team Newsham All the way from Olds  
Lisette Parkin: All the way from Saskatchewan!

Mimi Cole: Rocky Mountain House!

Bonnie Fermaniuk: Edmonton

Frank Chipps - Edmonton!

Pete Chipps Edmonton!

Johnny Korthuis: Lethbridge!

Our Prairie Chapter Director:

Keith Anderson; who brings all the stuff we need in a trailer, and remembers to bring all the stuff we think we don't...

Special thanks:

Local Chair Maureen Sexsmith-West and her team from Lady Bug Arborists

Maureen and her team did an awe-

some job doing all the things a local chair does in organizing the event. The local volunteer support from Lethbridge was awesome.

The City of Lethbridge Forestry team: For all their help with setup and the great job cleaning up all the trees, and the use of their Aerial trucks and cart for the entire event.

The Food Team: Bonnie Fermaniuk the Chapters VP and Gina Wright, who worked tirelessly before during and after the event to make sure we were all fed and watered!

TCC Chairman: Matt Vinet

Local Chair: Maureen Sexsmith

Executive Director: Keith Anderson

Head Judge: Gerard Fournier

Head Scorer: Lisette Parkin

Head Technician: Mike Tilford

Master of Ceremonies: Dwayne Neustaeter

Technical Advisor / Head set-up technician: Yannick Portauw

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- Technical Tree Felling & Cutting Calgary - Oct. 10 & 11
- Chainsaw Train the Trainer Caroline - Oct. 27 - Nov. 1
- Hazard & Danger Tree Cutting & Felling Calgary - Nov. 4 & 5
- Production Tree Removal & Rigging Calgary - Nov. 6 - 8

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Technical Advisor: Jesse Antonation  
 Technical Advisor: Maurice Pillotte  
 Event Co-Ordinator: Tasha Vinet  
 Prize Co-Ordinator: Carla Antonation  
 First Aid: Max Brown

Thanks to all the Judges:

**Work Climb:**

Head Judge: Sharon Vicknor  
 Her team:  
 Johnny Korthius  
 Yannick Portauw  
 Travis Cayer  
 Matthew Ridding

**Belayed Speed Climb:**

Head Judge: Codie Anderson  
 His team:  
 William Hillary

**Throw Line:**

Head Judge: Mimi Cole  
 Her team  
 Maureen Sexsmith-West  
 Greg Sutherland

**Aerial rescue:**

Head Judge: Laurie Newsham  
 His team:  
 Laurie Newsham  
 Carla Newsham  
 Tristan Colaco  
 Brooklyn Newsham  
 Andrew Johnson  
 Joyelle Newsham

**Ascent Event:**

Head Judge: Charlene Scott  
 Her team:  
 Charlene Scott  
 Jean Mathieu Daoust  
 Cyrille Reboullet: ZE French Arborist!  
 Marcel Pillotte  
 Kyle Giebelhaus  
 Jesse Asplund

**Masters Challenge:**

Head Judge: Gerard Fournier  
 His team:  
 Mike Telford  
 Codie Anderson  
 Mimi Cole  
 Charlene Scott

Sharon Vickner  
 Peter La Rue  
 Yannick Portauw  
 Frank Chipps  
 Pete Chips

**Masters Set-up team**

Frank Chipps  
 Pete Chipps  
 Yannick Portauw  
 Johnny Korthius

**Gear Check**

Mike Telford  
 Charlene Scott  
 Dwayne Neustaeter  
 Codie Anderson  
 Maurice Pillotte  
 Gerard Fournier

**Our Food team!**

Bonnie Fermaniuk  
 Gena Wright

**Bartenders**

Tennille Bezushko ; our awesome bartender from Vermeer!

*(Continued on page 12)*



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*(Continued from page 11)*

The Spirit of the Competition award was presented to

**Tanner Filipchuk**

This "Spirit of the Competition" prize kit is presented to the person who wins the vote of the TCC chairperson, judges and technicians for having the best sportsman-like attitude throughout the duration of the competition!

Generously donated annually by Arboriculture Canada Training & Education

Outstanding Volunteer Award ; Yannick Portauw, Technical Advisor / Head set-up technician who, year-in and year out comes to help with the competition. Yannick, we could not do this with out you!

Good luck to Jesse and Jordyn in Albuquerque in 2020!

Good luck to Joel Miller and Joey Sullivan who are representing the Prairie Chapter at the North American Tree Climbing Championships in San Diego, CA. October 11, 2019

And of course, the biggest thanks to the climbers who train and climb and work all year to put on a great show for all of us!

**CLIMBER LIST**

Shane MackIntosh  
Morgan Packman  
Josh Moule  
Emeliano Wekwert  
Jeff Urusky  
Colton Miller  
Hayden Paige  
DJ Neustaeter  
Rob Knight  
Jesse Antonation  
Wyatt Chipps  
Joel Miller  
Terry Schellenberg  
Justin Schafer  
Brody Britton  
Chris Meyers  
Dave Lutes  
Peter LaRue  
Tanner Filipchuk  
Jonathon Chown  
Liam McGuintic  
Daniel McCutcheon  
Michael Rinvold  
Joey Sullivan



Connor Strath  
Aric Kuehn  
Connor Dey  
Jeff Kiely  
Marek Lyjak  
Connor Fox  
Vlad Correa  
Jordyn Dyck  
Whitney Renney  
Ruth Maendel

To watch a video of the competition, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxTJVBjKwww&t=2s>

Thanks to Jeff Hinman for the awesome photographs! <https://jeffhinman.ca/>





Well summers pretty much done out here in Manitoba, but here's some things we been up to out here Arbor Wise...

### Arbor Day 2019 "All trees tell a story"

On June 2, our annual event (#16?) at St Vital Park, our favorite site – for the 3rd time. A very popular Winnipeg park.. The thing that will make or break an Arbor day-weather – co operated!...

As usual we had an overwhelming number of local Arborists, Professionals and volunteers dedicate their time to present an amazing event for the public and present the message.

We decided that day that Arbor Day Winnipeg is the most awesome display of volunteerism that we know of! It takes over 100 dedicated folks to pull it off!

Our theme as always was and is "All Trees tell a story" Every year a local elementary school class holds an art contest with this theme. This year's winner; Jazelle Bay-bay had her beautiful drawing displayed on our shirt, and was a guest of honor for the day, with "front of the line" privileges for all events!

This year, visitors were treated to: Zip Line rides... A great set up by Alliance Tree Care that ran the length of the entire site.

Kids and Adult Tree Climbs: Several trees were set up for the less to the more adventurous...from a simple foot lock a few feet up the rope to an all-out limb walk.....

*Bucket truck rides:* A breathtaking view of the park and the Red River and the city aboard The City of Winnipeg Forestry's two Aerial lifts....

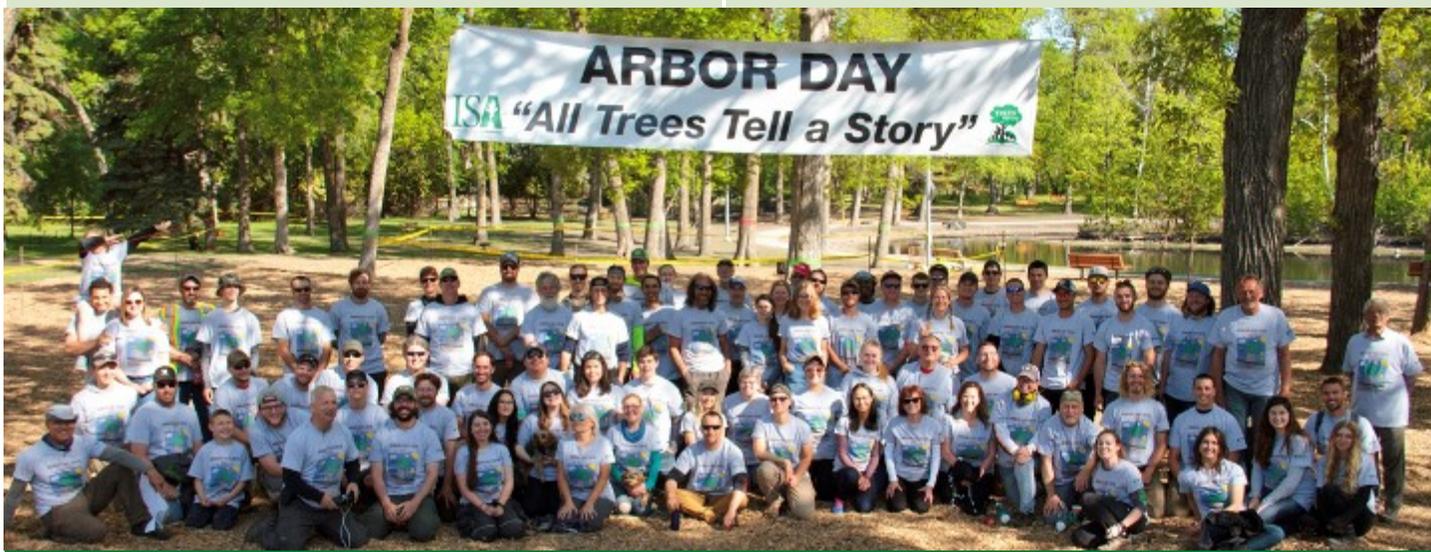
Our ever-popular kids craft tent, a chain saw carver and a host of educational displays...

Arbor Day is Co-sponsored by Trees Winnipeg and ISA Prairie Chapter.

A big thanks to all our Sponsors, volunteers and organizing committee for making this a continually amazing event.

- St Vital Park
- Isa Prairie Chapter
- Vermeer Canada
- Alliance Tree Care
- Pine To Palm Tree Service
- Timberland Tree Care
- Bio Forest
- Altec industries
- Arboriculture Canada Training
- TNT Tree
- City of Winnipeg Forestry
- Main Branch Tree Service
- Green Drop Tree Care
- Trilogy Tree Care
- Parkland Tree Care
- Treelife
- World of Water
- Green Site recycling
- Manitoba Gardner magazine
- Our non-profit vendors.... All the volunteers, climbers and Techs who make this possible.....

*A big special thanks to the girls who feed and water us!*  
Lise Bettens & Tasha Vinet



This article is by Russell McLendon from the Mother Nature Network. To see the complete article in its original form, go to: <https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/blogs/how-iceland-regrowing-forests-destroyed-vikings>

How do you find your way out of a forest in Iceland? Stand up.

That's an old Icelandic joke about the country's meager woodlands, and like most jokes, it contains a kernel of truth. Iceland is a famously beautiful place, yet forests only cover about 2 percent of its land area, and they tend to be relatively small.

This hasn't always been the case, however. When the first Vikings arrived in Iceland more than a millennium ago, they found an uninhabited landscape with plentiful birch forests and other woodlands — spanning anywhere from 25 to 40 percent of the island. According to one early saga, "At that time, Iceland was covered with woods, between the mountains and the shore."

So what happened? The Vikings began chopping down and burning Iceland's forests for timber, and to clear space for farmland and grazing pastures. "They removed the pillar out of the ecosystem," Gudmundur Halldorsson, research coordinator for the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, recently told *The New York Times*.

They also brought sheep, whose appetites for saplings made it difficult for Iceland's forests to recover. "Sheep grazing prevented regeneration of the birchwoods after cutting and the area of woodland continued to decline," explains the Iceland Forest Service. "A cooling climate (the little ice age) is sometimes cited as a possible cause for woodland decline, as are volcanic eruptions and other types of disturbance, but on closer inspection they can not explain the overall deforestation that took place."

Iceland is working to fix this, however, and regain the lost benefits of its ancient forests. Restoring the island's native tree cover could make a big difference in its soil-erosion problem, for example, reducing dust storms and boosting agriculture. It could also improve water quality and help reduce Iceland's carbon footprint.

Yet it's easier to save old-growth forests than it is to replace

them, especially in a cold place like Iceland. The country has been working on reforestation for more than 100 years, planting millions of non-native spruce, pine and larch trees as well as native birch. Iceland added hundreds of thousands of seedlings per year throughout much of the 20th century, reaching 4 million annually in the 1990s and up to 6 million per year in the early 2000s. Forestry funding was cut sharply after the 2008-2009 financial crisis, but Iceland has continued adding as many as 3 million new trees annually in recent years.

This effort has helped save some of Iceland's last natural forests, and even added to them, but it's a slow comeback. The island's forest cover likely fell below 1 percent in the mid-20th century, and birch forests now cover 1.5 percent of Iceland, while cultivated forests cover another 0.4 percent. By 2100, the country aims to increase its forest cover from 2 percent to 12 percent.

Ironically, a warming climate might make reforestation easier in Iceland. It has already raised the maximum elevation for Icelandic forestry by about 100 meters since the 1980s, the Forest Service notes, "creating the potential for afforestation of large areas on mountainsides and the periphery of the central highlands." Of course, it adds, "conditions for forestry are more complex than simply looking at annual or growing-season temperatures." And, as in most places, human-induced climate change also poses big environmental threats for Iceland, like melting its glaciers or making its native ecosystems more hospitable to invasive pests.

Iceland is wisely working to reduce its contributions to climate change — Reykjavik has set a target of becoming carbon-neutral by 2040, for example, while the country as a whole aims to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions 40 percent from 1990 levels by 2030. Adding trees is a big part of those plans, on top of the more direct benefits they offer for Iceland's soil, water and human health.

Iceland may never be a wooded wonderland, but by investing in trees, the island's leaders are restoring crucial pillars of their island's ancient ecosystem — and making sure their once-forsaken forests are no longer a joke.



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