

Tree climbing lessons offered

By Jenny Gabruch
of The StarPhoenix

Grant Wood is hoping some lessons in tree climbing will help protect Saskatoon's elm population.

Wood, a horticulturist with the University of Saskatchewan extension division, has brought in an expert to teach city, university and private industry employees how to climb trees, prune branches and then safely drop them to the ground using ropes.

The purpose is to trim dead branches off elm trees, since that's where the elm bark beetle, which carries the fungus that causes Dutch elm disease, breeds.

"The elm bark beetle goes for dead wood, so by removing it, you're delaying the onset of Dutch elm disease," said Wood.

Wood notes many elms in the city tower above the bucket trucks, which usually reach only 12 metres.

The eight-day program is being conducted by Calgary arborist Rob Romeril, past president of the International Society of Arboriculture.

Pruning of elm trees must be done by April 13, said Dave Domke, supervisor of arboriculture for the city.

The beetles are attracted to freshly-pruned trees, so pruning is prohibited during the period when the insects are most active, from mid-April to the end of July.



— SP Photo by Richard Marjan

Dan Francis (top) undertakes a simulated aerial rescue of "victim" Karen Campbell as part of an eight-day arborist program