



## Champion Trees



ArborMaster trains with an organization that climbs Champion trees around the world to collect material for propagation.

One might wonder how Meryl Marsh managed to position herself at the top of one of the oldest living trees on earth. Swaying from a rope a couple hundred feet up along the side of the majestic Giant Sequoia was not only an awe inspiring experience for her, but invokes a certain amount of reverence in those of us who gaze upon the ancient giants worthy of our respect. As Meryl so aptly puts it, “Even those who are detached from the environment cannot ignore a 3,000 year old tree.

”Meryl, for the past 2 ½ years, has been a member of the team at *Archangel Ancient Tree Archive*; a non-profit organization that collects and archives ancient native tree genetics from the wild. They create clones through traditional agricultural propagation for the purpose of functional forestation. Their mission is to find the world’s largest and oldest trees and attempt to capture the genetic memory in the DNA that has enabled them to survive 2,000 years; not an easy task while coping with the calamities and margins of life, and most trees don’t make it. Their archival living library is being developed to preserve the best genetics they know of to clone these great grandfather trees and introduce them back into the wild to strengthen our forest genetics.

Meryl’s favorite place to be is in the woods. She loves the physical work and being outside, and is eager to take advantage of every opportunity to educate when asked about her work. But before she teamed up with Archangel she had no climbing experience and needed training. Her involvement in collecting naturally led her to a desire to be in the trees which led her and climbing partner, Jake, to take advantage of the adaptable training techniques that ArborMaster offers.

Rip Tompkins, co-founder of ArborMaster, geared each training session toward a specific task while considering the nature of the ancient trees. Preserving the trees was of the utmost importance and required approaching them with non-invasive and respectful climbing techniques. The training and follow-up clinics were invaluable, Meryl said, in learning how to maneuver around the trees and get to the tips with the least amount of impact.

“I received top-notch training that gave me the confidence to tackle whatever I needed to do. I felt like I was in control of my environment, much more than I do when driving down the highway. Gaining a thorough knowledge of my gear and hitch, and the importance of inspection, with such a strong emphasis on safety, instilled a greater confidence in me.”

Although Meryl loves being in the trees; climbing and collecting from huge Sequoias in California and ancient Oaks in Ireland isn't all she does at Archangel. Fund raising, maintaining their web site and blog, and numerous other tasks all contribute to their mission. Keeping our ancient trees from joining the list of 8,000 species of trees already on the endangered species list has become a passion for her and her colleagues at Archangel.

Visit [www.ancienttreearchive.org](http://www.ancienttreearchive.org) to learn more about this unique organization. If you love trees your time spent there will be worthwhile.