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ROCHESTER ARBORIST WORKSHOP

February 19, 2026

Rochester Event Center
Rochester, MN

Featuring

Warren Williams
Nick Markley

Speakers

Warren Williams

Warren is a Senior Safety Lead of the SET (Safety, Education, & Training) Team at Wright Tree Service, which supports 18 divisions throughout the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Canada.

Warren was taught how to use a rope to climb a tree in 1991 and has been addicted ever since. After over 30 years in the industry, he still loves the challenges of arboriculture and the fulfillment he receives from conquering those challenges and engaging with arborists and tree lovers alike. He has an AAS Degree in Horticulture, is an ISA Certified Arborist, a Certified First Aid CPR Trainer, has been a judge or technician at the ISA International Climbing Competitions (ITCC) for more than 20 years, and was a founding member of North American Training Solutions (NATS). He can go on with certifications and accomplishments, but to be honest, he's just "a big kid"; He gets to play with a lot of cool toys and make a huge mess with friends, what could be better than that!

On a more serious note, Warren loves the challenge of pruning trees to improve their shape, structure, and health, as well as training other arborists to have similar skills. He enjoys educating both clients and fellow arborists about the "needs" trees have and helping them have a better understanding of the ecosystem so that they can better appreciate and enjoy nature. He is a proud arborist and cannot think of any other profession that would give more fulfillment or a greater sense of accomplishment. Live well!

Nick Markley

Nick's passion for arboriculture has taken him into the canopy in over 25 U.S. states and several other countries. Based in Ohio, he has won the Ohio ISA Tree Climbing Championship four times and has represented his chapter at the International Tree Climbing Championship on four occasions, with a career-best finish of 7th in 2018. With 15 years in the industry, Nick works across the U.S. as an independent climbing arborist, industry trainer, and event coordinator. He serves as an instructor and committee member for the Florida Chapter ISA's Prescription Pruning Qualification and holds credentials including ISA Board Certified Master Arborist, Certified Tree Climber and Evaluator, Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, and NCCER Certified Crane Operator.

Rochester Arborist Workshop Planning Team

Organizers

Jay Maier
Mitch Hoy
Sydney Hudzinski

Other Contributors

Scott Ferris
Nick Grebe

Agenda

7:45 : Welcome and Opening Remarks

8:00 : A Different Take on Safety (Williams)

There has been a "movement" in the way the industry looks at safety over the last 20 years. Traditional views of safety focus on the worker's need to not make mistakes, follow the rules to the letter, and always show proper judgement. Organizations have defined themselves by the lack of negative events and keeping safety numbers low. We will discuss what we have been able to do with this Traditional view and what we haven't done. Then we will discuss a different viewpoint and the possible impact it can have on safety in our industry.

9:00 : The Prescription Approach to Pruning: An Intro to the Qualification (Markley)

This session gives an overview of the Prescription Pruning Qualification (PPQ) and the concepts behind objective-based pruning. The PPQ's systematic process for developing prescriptions will be introduced, emphasizing evaluation of tree conditions and objectives before pruning begins. Attendees will gain an understanding of how prescriptions improve consistency, accountability, and outcomes by clearly defining what to prune and why before work begins, supporting better management of trees, particularly in urban and suburban environments. The PPQ is a culmination of the efforts of the Florida Chapter ISA, decades of research by Dr. Ed Gilman, and the commitment of the PPQ committee, developed in alignment with industry standards.

10:30 : Equipment Inspection, Configuration, and Selection (Williams)

Climbing equipment to some is merely PPE, to others it is a passion and a hobby, while still others are confused and overwhelmed with the sheer volume of options and variety available. In this session we will define the inspection and retirement process, shed some light on equipment interaction, and clarify how to choose the right equipment.

11:30 : Lunch and Door Prizes

12:30 : Pruning With Purpose: Start Now or Chase Problems Later (Markley)

We will look at how early, intentional pruning can prevent larger structural and management issues down the road. We'll discuss common mistakes that lead to chronic defects, weaker structure, and repeat work. Examples will show how small, intentional cuts can encourage stronger architecture and reduce the likelihood of failures in the future. This talk emphasizes proactive decisions that strengthen structure, support tree health, and reduce failure potential.

1:30 : Tree Climbing Competitions: Do They Live Up to the Hype? (Williams)

We will discuss the organization that promotes and facilitates these climbing competitions, the purpose of climbing competitions, and the value of attendance and/or participation for you as a business owner, manager, or field employee.

3:00 : Follow the Force: Small Angles, Big Consequences (Markley)

This talk will break down how forces move through a tree and how climbing and rigging choices directly affect those forces. We'll look at rope angles, anchor choices, load direction, and how small changes can create big differences at unions and attachment points. Using real-world climbing and rigging scenarios, we'll compare crown anchors, base anchors, and redirects to show how forces are amplified or reduced. The goal is to help arborists make better decisions in the tree by understanding what the forces are doing, not just where the rope is going.

4:00-6:00 : Social and Climbers Corner (Grebe, Ferris, & Hudzinski)

*Breaks with exhibitors will happen between sessions throughout the day.
6.0 ISA CEUs available; Qualifies for MN Tree Inspector Recertification*