

# *Arbornautics*



Bonnie Bryan photo

Verna Mumby, arborist, climbed the large cottonwood in the Mount Baker RV Park and Campground Tuesday morning to prune some branches from the 100 year-old tree. Mumby did not use spurs or spikes to help her climb the tree as those would damage it. Mumby used a rope and saddle to get up the tree to get up into the tree without harming it. See more on Cranbrook's public trees, Page 4.

# The Cottonwood Chronicles

### Magnificent Baker Park cottonwood among the 821 public trees in inventory of Cranbrook's urban forest

By BONNIE BRYAN  
Townsman Staff

Arborist Verna Mumby stopped foot traffic on 14th Avenue and in Baker Park yesterday morning as she scaled the 85-foot high (26 metres) cottonwood in the Mount Baker RV Park and

Campground. The 100 year-old tree needed some pruning done and so Mumby climbed right up.

"The beauty of this tree is if it has been topped, it wasn't topped as harshly as was done in Rotary Park," Mumby said. "It's a much

broader tree, a much bigger tree. It's well over 100 years old."

She said cottonwoods are the kind of trees pioneers would have found when they came to the area. They would leave the trees to shade their cattle.

"The reason I'm pruning this is it's in a site where there's a lot of people and we want to keep it safe. Taking out the deadwood is the major issue with this particular tree," Mumby said. "This one, for its age and its species is doing very well, it's healthy. This is a really good example of when trees aren't repeatedly topped, how healthy they really can be and how long they can live."

There are also a few large pines in the campground, even one ponderosa pine that is valued at \$19,000.

Even if you are not familiar with the term "topping" you have seen examples of the pruning style all over the City. The International Society of Arboriculture website states that topping is the indiscriminate cutting of tree



Bonnie Bryan photo

Arborist Verna Mumby at work in the 85-foot-high, 100-year-old cottonwood in Baker Park.

branches to stubs or lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role. The trees in Rotary Park and Baker Park are an excellent example of this pruning method.

Mumby told City Council on Monday night that the continual topping of trees has reduced their life span, causing decay to develop in many of the trees' stems, making them unsafe to retain.

Mumby was contracted by the City to do an Urban Forest Management Plan. This included making a detailed tree inventory of the trees in the City and identifying and prioritizing specific tree planting, maintenance and removal activities.

A total of 821 public trees were inventoried. Ninety trees were not included in the inventory because they were assessed as immediate removals.

According to the report there is good tree genus diversity, with the majority of trees being spruce Colorados, ash greens and maple Manitobas.

As for tree health about 450 trees are in good condition, 350 were fair and the remaining few were in poor health.

"Right now the public trees are mostly in fair condition. This is a great time for the city to get on board with a tree program. There's been planting and then not good enough follow up care," Mumby said. "Now is the time to catch them and get watering and fertilizing and mulching and getting them

into better condition."

Mayor Ross Priest said City administration will be studying her report in detail and implementing many, if not all, of the strategies to keep Cranbrook's urban forest healthy.

In addition to the 90 trees that were not included in the inventory because she assessed them as needing to be removed, Mumby recommended removing 12 other trees.

"I'm the one that's given them the kiss of death, which I don't like doing, but it's a liability and it's also, for me, when you look at a tree that's not doing well, I would just rather have it taken out because it's just suffering," she said. "Most of the removals are within the parks (Baker and Rotary) because of the treatment they had received in previous years. They sped up their life expectancy because of the pruning so they are all maturing at the same time. I've tried to take out just the extreme hazards, the ones I'm very concerned about people being around."

Mumby put the value of Cranbrook's public trees at \$1.8 million in total, with trees ranging from \$140 to \$19,000. She also recommended the City hire, train and maintain funding for an arborist position to maintain health of the urban forest.

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