

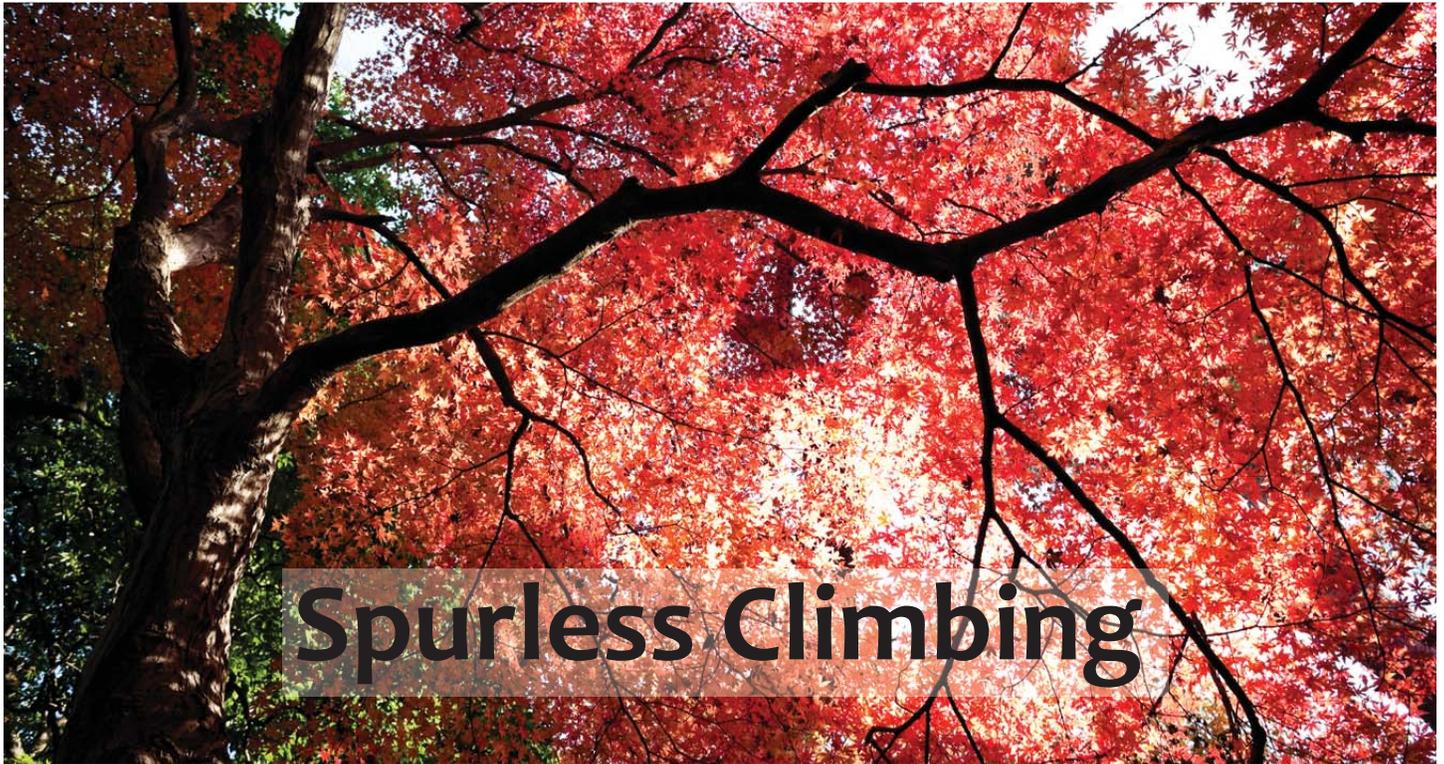
# How To Grow

Tree Care Tips from Certified Arborist Aaron Wurts

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## Spurless Climbing

When faced with the task of hiring a tree service, clients often assume the tree climber will be using spurs. Spurs have been used for many years in the forestry industry. Because the arboriculture industry is new to the West Coast and many former foresters have begun working in the urban environment, this is a common misunderstanding.

However, spurs damage trees by leaving wounds open to decay, pests and disease. **Spurs should only be used on trees slated for removal.** Within the arboriculture industry, the accepted industry standard for climbing and moving around a tree is a method called Spurless Climbing.

Spurless climbing involves two dynamic rope systems that allow a person to move around a tree's canopy and to access any part of the tree including the very tips of its branches. Using this

system it is possible to properly prune trees no matter their size or location. Previous issues of this newsletter have discussed why it is important to make proper pruning cuts. Spurless climbing allows the climber to get in position to make those proper cuts without having to stretch, reach or use clumsy gear like pole-pruners and pole-saws.

By contrast, spurs do not allow the climber to access all parts of the tree because the climber on spurs is dependent on his spurs to stay in the tree and thus, must stay near the trunk.

Companies that use spurs often get around this mobility issue by using ladders and boom trucks. Unfortunately, even with ladders and boom trucks the arborist often can't get close enough to make proper pruning cuts. Large bucket trucks are limited in where they can reach. They can't drive in on trail

systems, tight spaces or on sensitive understory plants in parks and they don't allow the arborist access to all parts of the tree's canopy.

As the leaves fall, the beautiful spreading branches of deciduous trees are revealed. Though spurless climbing is suited to all trees, this time of year allows an excellent opportunity to view the natural form of deciduous trees and gives an idea of how a spurless climber might get around a large spreading canopy.

A spurless climber can move around the tree using hands, feet and relying on their harness and ropes. The harness (Fig. 1 - A) has a seat (similar to a window washer's harness) as opposed to a traditional forestry-style belt that requires the climber to put all of his weight on his spurs.

**Continued...**

## Q. How do I know what kind of tree worker to hire?

**A.** With the long history of forestry in BC, urban tree work on the West Coast can be confusing. Foresters, utility certified tree workers and ISA arborists carry different certifications and perform different services.

To better understand the difference



*Spurless climber doing residential work.*

between these tree workers it helps to look at the objectives of each. Forestry workers specialize in clearing and maintaining large woodlots in a forest context with the objective of maximizing timber value. Though some skills are transferable to the urban environment (eg. removals), some techniques that are well suited to forestry (like topping and spiral pruning) can pose hazards when applied in an urban setting.

Utility certified arborists understand the dangers of working with electricity and focus on clearing vegetation around electrical wires using specialized equipment. The objective is

hazard reduction and public safety.

To understand the expertise of an arborist, it is useful to know the definition of the word arboriculture: **The planting, care, and scientific cultivation of trees and woody vegetation in a non-forest context.** An ISA certified arborist's objective is the integration of trees in the urban environment with a focus on tree health and preservation.

Asking about the experience and training of anyone working on your trees will tell you if they can achieve **your** objectives.

### **NEW! Fertilize your trees.**

We are proud to offer the Comox Valley a new service: fertilizing, soil improvement, watering and aerating your trees & shrubs. Watch for the winter issue of **How to Grow** for more information on deep root injection and why it is beneficial.

## Spurless Climbing cont...

**T**here are two rope systems used for spurless climbing: a 12ft lanyard (B) and 150' of climbing line (E). Using the ropes, the arborist climbs to the highest part of the tree and puts in an anchor which allows safe access to all parts of the tree. Other related gear are the split tail (F), carabiners, hand saw (D), and a climbing helmet (C). By using this specialized gear, spurless climbing is fast, effective, safe, and doesn't interfere with the tree's health.

**If you are interested in attending a spurless climbing demonstration, please call 250-702-3453 to sign up for the next demo.**



*Fig. 1*

## Comox Valley Certified Arborist

**W**ith four years of training in horticulture and eight years of experience in arboriculture, Aaron Wurts brings a fresh perspective to arboriculture in the Comox Valley.

**A**aron is an ISA certified arborist, tree worker/climber specialist and hazard tree assessor. Aaron has a passion for spurless climbing and approaches all pruning with a genuine concern for the health and longevity of the tree.



**Aaron Wurts is growing.**  
Watch for our new name:  
**GROW Tree Care**

Tree Care for People Who Care About Trees.

**GROW** tree care

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