

Around the world, climbing arborists promote professional arboriculture and climbing safety through their involvement in tree climbing championships. The ISA Climbing Arborist Spotlight gives tree climbers a chance to share their stories, recognize their achievements, and provide insights into the industry. ISA is excited to launch this new spotlight as it is the 50th anniversary of the International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC).

In observance of Women's History Month and the 25th anniversary of women competing in ISA Tree Climbing Championships, this month, ISA is highlighting Alana Murray and Isobel Watson, both of Arboriculture Australia. Murray and Watson have been in the industry for the past 10 years.

During the recent Asia Pacific Tree Climbing Championship, Murray secured first place, while Watson took second. Watson jokingly said that even though she constantly scores right behind Murray, she hopes that they inspire other female climbers out there.

"It's getting better; it's moving with the times, but it started as a male-dominated industry," Watson said. "I think seeing females flourish in the industry, and being supported by men doing so as well, just gives new females coming in a little bit of inspiration and hope that they'll end up successful."

Murray said they are both working to give back through events like helping to host Women in Arboriculture with the Victorian Tree Industry Organization and participating in amateur competitions to mentor new climbers in competitive climbing. In general, she added, female climbers need to find supportive environments.

"I wish someone had told me when I first started; if you're not getting support from the company you're at, don't stay there," Murray said. "There are companies out there that will support you and help you get better. Move around until you find that."

Murray added, for anyone, being a climbing arborist also takes a toll on your body as well as your mental health, so it's important to take care of yourself.

"It's constant hard work," she said. "So, you do get down a lot and probably lose motivation, and I feel like if that happens, just change something up, and your passion reignites pretty quickly."

Despite the ups and downs that come with the job, Watson said that they both do this work because they love it, and the tree climbing competitions give them an additional support system and community.

"I love coming to things like (APTCC)," she said. "You see people, you meet people from all the way across the world. This is great for traveling. You can go anywhere in the world and work in this industry, and these competitions are really good for bringing people together and creating friendships."