
wannabe arborist

Posted by coonrad - 05/27/2006 05:04am

I've been working with computer networks for the past 8 years or so. I've been successful and make decent money. However, I have trouble seeing myself sitting in front of a computer for another 8 years. Have you seen the movie 'office space?'...think of me.

I want to become an arborist and work outside. How do I do that? I figured the best way would be to get a job as a groundsman and start studying for my arborist certification. Once I get certified and have a few years experience. Start my own gig. That's the plan atleast. What do you folks in the business have to say about that?

I'm in the northwest (conifer world). Is most of the work takedowns here...or is there alot of pruning and other work? I don't think I'd be happy just doing takedowns.

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Posted by moss - 06/01/2006 01:11pm

Hello Coonrad,

If you don't get enough response here you'll find a bunch of treeworkers who will be glad to talk about getting into the biz on either of the these websites:

TreeBuzz

Arboristsite

Being that you're in the northwest, check out Tim Kovar's rec climbing courses on the New Tribe site. It's a great way to get foundation training in tree climbing practices and safety.
Tim's courses

By your posts it looks like you're doing a good job of teaching yourself to climb trees but there's nothing like working with a good instructor.

-moss

Originally posted by coonrad

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Posted by Jim W - 06/01/2006 05:40pm

Look in the "Yellow Pages" for the biggest ads (they most likely are the more reputable companies). I looked to see if the "big boys" here in the east had offices in your area--they don't.

If it were me, I'd call and visit and let my gut instinct guide me--do I trust these people with my life (that's what it comes down to). And if they wouldn't train me (formal in addition to OJT), I'd look elsewhere.

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Posted by coonrad - 06/06/2006 12:59am

Thanks for the feedback moss and jim...

I'll do some research on the other sites as well.

-coonrad

Changing careers

Posted by Oldtimer - 06/06/2006 09:30am

I have been lucky to seat "in front of the Computer" for 17 years (I did 6 years before that as a Health Code Inspector) and making a reasonable living in an Air conditioned cube so I will respect anyone willing to do Arborist Work for living. I have been climbing (RTC) for 3 years now and have done a couple of take downs and pruning work (on my own property) so I got a taste of the amount of hard labor involved. That work is too hard, dangerous and poorly paid (compared to computers work) so at my age I will continue in front of the computer and let the professionals mess with the tree work.

If you are young (30's) give it a try for a while to see if that is what you want to do for living. You may be able to do it but at least you always have the computer experience and knowledge to fall back just in case the tree business does not pan out for supporting a family.

Posted by Electrojake - 06/06/2006 09:37pm

My 2 cents worth to coonrad. . .

The good part about your wish to do tree work is that your willing to sign-on as a grounds man. Also, you may be able to seek work as a summer helper so you can get a taste of the work and see how the boss runs the operation.

Some things that might help. . .

Have a CDL.

Be mechanically inclined. Trucks, chippers, and your saws will always need service by the end of the day.

Be first aid certified or at the very least CPR & First Responder trained.

Brush up on your Spanish.

Be forewarned: Every shop has at least one jerk. Don't sweat him, seniority will eventually pave your way.

Unless your Dad owns the company, be prepared to sweat.

Other info. . .

A number of the linemen I work with were in the tree business and came over to doing high voltage work. According to them linework is both easier & safer, (go figure).

There is another side to tree work. . .

If you have a B.S. or better, there is a scientific/research side. That's a lot different than "production" work.

Best bet: Start looking at places like TreeBuzz and Gypoclimber.

Them boys are the real-deal. As for me... I'm just a hobbyist.

2 cents applied :)

Good luck on your adventures!

Electrojake

Posted by coonrad - 06/06/2006 10:08pm

Be forewarned: Every shop has at least one jerk. Don't sweat him, seniority will eventually pave your way.

Hey, I have one of these in my office now... :)

There is another side to tree work. . .

If you have a B.S. or better, there is a scientific/research side. That's a lot different than "production" work. That would be my dream job...crawling around the canopy studying epiphytes or something... I do have a B.S., but I imagine these types of jobs are few and far between...

I think I'm going to keep it in the recreational vein for now, try to hone up my skills and meet up with Tim down in Oregon at some point. Maybe try to pick up some small pruning jobs here and there...

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Posted by Electrojake - 06/07/2006 05:57pm

You can have a great time doing pruning and light removal work without dedicating your life to it. Additionally, there are large private gardens frequently located in or near many of our cities which have a professional arborist on duty full time. If you can climb and have your own gear, you could probably hire-on as an assist for a while.

I don't imagine you would earn much money but it's got to be better than the grueling production work of a commercial arbor outfit.

The added plus: Climbing with others, especially ISA guys is always a learning experience. The more I climb with real arbor workers, the more I realize I don't know crap. And they're a good bunch of guys from what I have seen thus far.

I like being a rec-climber, but I certainly do appreciate the pros.
Electrojake

P.S. Oregon eh? I'll bet they have some great timber out there!

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Posted by treegirly - 10/08/2006 11:14am

Hi There

How are you doing on your quest on becoming an arborist? Are you still looking for an opportunity to work in the field?

Treegirly

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