

I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A TREE!!

By *Treemendous Tom*

Ever wonder what it is like to be a tree? Gently swaying in the breeze or standing at attention to survive all that Texas weather has to offer. The sunshine would make you smile but an ice storm would make you frown. A snow storm could give you some very cool clothes but too much white would not be a good thing.

Being a tree, you would never have to deal with politics, money, taxes, unreasonable people, or idiot drivers. Buying insurance or dealing with relatives...not a worry. I could grow to like this tree gig thing. I think I would much rather be...a tree.



And so a tree grows

I wanted to be a tree for so long...I eventually became one. Not all at once. First there were a few leaves that appeared in the hair and I tried to ignore it. As my skin started to turn to bark, it became tough to ignore. I always wanted to be a tree but...I never thought I would **grow** into one. It seems to happen only on the night before an Arbor Day, Earth Day, or Farm Day event. I wonder if there is always a full moon on the night before or if it is just a coincidence? Ok, I am just teasing.

Someone needed to develop a tree costume because the one that shows up at Earth Day Texas each year stands on stilts and scares the hell out of the children. Not the ideal image of trees for children. Surfing the internet did not find anything close to looking like a **nice** talking tree. Most costumes contained leaves that were not from an actual tree. A big, talking, Swedish ivy blob was not our goal. A tree man must look like a cool tree and not a house plant. Eventually, a seamstress and friend that had done some costume work, Christie Yarbrough and another friend, RuthAnn Jackson, offered to help.

As various parts were developed, we decided not to build a frankentree suit but rather, a nice talking tree that handed out "Trees are the Answer" bumper stickers and educated others about the benefits of trees. Sounds easy but developing an ivy blob is not the same as a talking tree that actually has a root flare.



Treemendous Tom



Climbing Buddy helping out

To avoid embarrassing family and friends, we developed a name and proclaimed him to be “Treemendous Tom, the Tree Education Guy”.

The first steps of Treemendous Tom involved carefully walking into the crowd at Earth Day Texas to avoid any root damage. Most were laughing and accepted a bumper sticker. Other reactions:

- Most of them wanted their children to hug the Tom for a photo. One small girl had her photo taken but happen to see my boot sticking out from under a root. She yelled out loud “Mommy look at that, he is not a real tree...there is a boot under there”. We laughed until we cried.
- A few would see me and run the other way to avoid having to deal with some crazy tree guy who must be selling something.
- Some just had a look that says “you really need some serious help there pal”.
- A few passed and yelled “I am groot” and a limb was raised in recognition. (makes no sense unless you saw the movie “Defenders of the Universe”).
- As a few friends approached, I ask if they wanted a sticker. Afterward, I would say something that only a friend would know about. They always responded by saying “do I know you?” Of course my response was something even more personal and they responded with “who the hell are you?” By this time, the laughter was hurting my sides, especially when they figured out my identity.
- Folks with displays wanted a photo of Treemendous Tom in their booth to post somewhere. Likely with a note that says “it appears one of the Austin weirdo’s was in attendance”.



“Hug a Tree

It was cool being a tree for a day but the dogs that came near my roots started to become a worry. I

may look too much like a tree!! All I need next year is a few little acorns and saplings to walk with me.



“Bees and Trees”

By the way, my botanic name is *Quercus houserii*.

Jonathan Reynolds' Flood Album

Picture stories



Elm Fork Flood



Jon surveying Clear Creek Flood



CCNHC Fisherman's Trail



Fishing at Ray Roberts spillway

Flood Album cont'd

Clear Creek flooding



Irrigation dam



RR outflow channel

RR spillway



RR outflow fishing

**TRAINING COMMITTEE: WHO, WHAT, WHERE,
WHEN, HOW?**

I remember the day Van Elliott asked me to be on the training committee in 2013. I had just completed the Elm Fork training class and thought "Why not?", even though I had no idea what it meant to be on the "Training Committee". Ah, I soon found out!

The training committee begins work in January in preparation of the class that starts in September. We meet once a month for approximately 2 hours after the Monthly Meeting to assign responsibilities, establish due dates, report on action items and determine how to most efficiently conduct a class for 30-40 students.

The committee this year consists of Cheryl Ellis (her 3rd year), myself, Rita Lokie (2nd year), Larry Jackson (1st year), Erin Piper (1st year) and Kris Robertson (1st year).

We have been running the training committee as a team for the past two years which means we rotate attending the BOD, and we work very hard to form a consensus about all aspects of training. Not always an easy task but we feel it is very effective.

So what are the responsibilities?

- ◆ *Respond to inquiries from Texas Master Naturalist via Michelle Haggerty*
- ◆ *Work with Chapter Treasurer to develop training budget.*
- ◆ *Coordinate training of members-in-training according to State guidelines*
- ◆ *Secure speakers and send follow up emails*
- ◆ *Develop training schedule*
- ◆ *Arrange classroom space*
- ◆ *Arrange for Speakers' expense reimbursements, if necessary, or gifts*
- ◆ *Update application*
- ◆ *Arrange posting of training program and application on Chapter and State websites*
- ◆ *Work with the Publicity Committee to publicize the Training Program*