



Photos by Arizona State Forestry Division

WANTED: MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

TREE HUNTERS NEEDED TO FIND ARIZONA'S WONDERFUL WOODS

BY CHERYL HURD

Despite the acres of forest we played in as children, we always knew what it meant to “meet at the tree.” In the stands of maple, oak and birch, there was one special tree that served as the childhood gathering place. If asked, most of us can reference a special tree, whether for its size, its history or its connection to a loved one or fond memory.

The Arizona State Forestry Division wants you to share your stories and to help discover new trees that warrant recognition as some of the greats.

The Arizona's Magnificent Trees program is a collaboration of Arizona State Forestry, Arizona Community Tree Council and the Arizona Native Plant Society, and is designed to make tree hunters out of all of us.

“We want people to get out there and explore not only their national forests but their communities too. There are a lot of trees that could be state or national champions in their own back yard,” explains John Richardson, Forest Program Specialist with the Arizona State Forestry Division. “We want to celebrate and recognize trees that are magnificent in Arizona.”

During an Arbor Day celebration in April, Arizona will unveil the Magnificent Seven for 2013, and the hunt is on for 2014 contenders. Some Arizona trees will even earn national recognition.

If you're looking for a fun family tradition or want to add some adventure to your weekend hike, check out the program guidelines below and then set out in search of Arizona's next magnificent tree!

THE CHAMPIONS

Champion trees earn this distinction by being the largest of their species in the state, and then are entered in the running for a national title. Among the contenders for 2013 are a big tooth maple northeast of Pine that measures 190 inches in circumference, and 72 feet tall with a 50-foot crown spread; a manzanita in the Sedona area with an 88-inch circumference

that stands 19 feet tall with a 23-foot crown spread; and a Chihuahua pine on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation that is 122 inches in circumference, and 90 feet tall with a 34-foot spread.

HERITAGE TREES

It's not always about the size. The Heritage Tree program recognizes trees that have a special connection with people. Perhaps they were planted in memory of a loved one, or donated to the community from a sister city. Candidates for heritage trees may have cultural significance or represent an important event.

WITNESS TREES

There is a special recognition for trees that witnessed Arizona's statehood on Feb. 14, 1912. These 100-plus-year-old giants create a sense of place and serve as a connection from the present to the past. Richardson references two of the many witness trees as examples—a mesquite tree in Wickenburg dubbed the Jail Tree because outlaws were hanged from it in 1863, and an ironwood tree in Quartzsite called the Desert Survivor, which is estimated to be 1,051 years old. Imagine what they would tell us if they could talk!

GUIDELINES FOR TREE HUNTERS

Anyone can be a good tree hunter—you just have to enjoy the outdoors and be aware of what is around you. Tree hunting adds fun and adventure to your weekend and there's the thrill and bragging rights that come with discovering the next magnificent tree. Be prepared to take photos and provide GPS coordinates so your find can be recorded. The website for American forests (americanforests.org) has a list of trees for comparison as well as measuring guidelines and other related information. The Arizona State Forestry Division has a website for nominations and a list of trees that still need champions. ■

For more information, go to azsf.az.gov/arizonas-magnificent-trees