

2011 International Tree Climbing Championship—Australia

by Shelly Wollerman

The International Tree Climbing Championship was held this past month in Parramatta, Australia, near Sydney. While mentally preparing for the trip, I could not help but wonder what species of tree would be used for the competition? My guess was that it would be some kind of eucalyptus tree, or some other native tree. Turns out, most of the events were set up in what is known as a lemon gum, *Corymbia citriodora*. When the leaves are crushed, they smell of lemon. Another interesting aspect of lemon gums is that they have very smooth bark, comparable to that of a sycamore tree. Since I had arrived, I quickly found out that it had been one of the wettest winters the Sydney area had seen in a very long time. It had rained during the three days of setup prior to the competition and the forecast did not look very promising. Not knowing what the weather was going to bring, a couple of modifications were made to the trees. In order to provide a safer climb, a series of clove hitches were

wrapped around the limbs, allowing competitors to reach the ends of the limbs without fear of slipping and going for a big swing. This proved to be very helpful, considering a few competitors had to complete the work climb in a downpour. This was a very good example of how the judges and technicians kept the safety of the competitors in mind while not sacrificing the quality of the competition. They did a great job of finding a balance between the two. They also had a very good setup for the work climb. It was a lot of fun to do. The work climb was definitely my favorite part of the

competition. Being a younger climber—lacking the experience that most competitors have at the international level—I was very happy with how I performed. I am very thankful to WAA for sending me and giving me this opportunity of a lifetime. Thanks.

