



## **STRASSER PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT THIRD VICTORY**

By Sharon Lilly

After capturing the International Tree Climbing Championship title for the third time in four years (1999, 2000, 2002), Bernd Strasser of Germany took time to reflect on the Profession, climbing competitions, and his love of trees.

Bernd, known to his friends as Beddes, works throughout Germany and occasionally in Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, and other European countries. His tree work ranges from seed collection and leaf sampling for research institutions to training in advanced climbing techniques, aerial rescue, and rigging.

Because he climbs frequently Beddes doesn't have a training program for competition. "I planned to go running more frequently before the ITCC, but that didn't happen. For me, all-day work is the best preparation. Getting in contact with the trees I'm climbing is more important to me than lifting weights." He adds that climbers tend to forget, especially after a long work day, the importance of stretching. "It not only loosens up tension in your muscles but also in your Spirit, and it reduces the risk of injuries."

Beddes's smooth climbing style reflects his love of trees and climbing. "Occasionally, in the summer I take off my shoes in the tree and climb barefoot (not when I work with a chain saw, of course). My movements automatically get softer and smoother."

When asked about the difference between competition and everyday climbing, Beddes responded, "First, I usually spend more time with the tree. Second, in a competition you have to be ready to perform at a certain moment. Over my years of competitions, I get the feeling that some climbers take the winning Part too seriously. Sure it's great to win. Still, the gathering with the people and the trees, the exchange of Information and techniques, and the experience are the most important. It's always interesting and inspiring to watch the different approaches of the individual climbers to the given tasks. Even though it's a competition, we should not forget to take a little time aside to give thanks to the trees . . . that's one of the aspects where competitions are the Same as everyday climbing."

Beddes felt that staying relaxed helped him win in Seattle; he tries not to delve too deeply into the competitive side. "I try to focus on the challenge of each Single event and the joy of moving in the tree."

Beddes's love of trees and his Profession shines through in every conversation. He wants to remind all arborists of their important role. "The state of the trees reflects the state of the earth, which means we have a great responsibility. Getting together at competition to share ideas, exchange techniques, and to make friends is a wonderful thing and I wouldn't want to miss it. But let's not forget to focus on the trees to help them to live a better life."