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ginkgo, Norway spruce and Scotch, Austrian and French maritime pine.

Now, more than 75 years later, 25 of those plots remain in the Camp Kiwanilong Arboretum, a little-known trove of exotic trees that sandwich the camp site.

"Once you know your pines, you walk through there and it's kind of mind blowing," said Kathleen Sayce, a Nahcotta, Wash., ecologist who has surveyed the grounds to figure out "what's growing where." The arboretum is home to at least 12 different species of pine, according to her findings.

But local arborist Luke Colvin of Olney says as the trees get bigger, the plantation is increasingly crowded, and the trees have to compete for sunlight; a dense canopy chokes off air flow through the stands and increases the risk of infestation.

Colvin thinks a little trimming could help preserve the arboretum's unique and historic composition.

"This is an absolutely stunning, beautiful area that has been unmaintained as to the tree structure and canopy," he said. "Without reducing the canopy, you'll start having failures."

Colvin went to Camp Kiwanilong as a kid and now makes his living scaling giant trees on the coast and cutting out dead wood and redundant branches to keep them healthy. Though he's already volunteered his skills to help keep the arboretum intact, he knows there's more work needed than he can do alone.

On Saturday, he's holding a tree preservation event at Camp Kiwanilong in the hopes of recruiting new members for his "Arborists in the Arboretum" volunteer group. The day will start with a fruit-tree pruning clinic and continue with a "tree preservation party," where he'll demonstrate how to maintain 75-year-old Sitka spruce, maritime pine and Scotch pine trees in the arboretum. A donation of two cans of food for the Clatsop County Food Banks will get visitors into both events.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson thinks it's a great idea. She's planning to attend the preservation party to support Colvin's effort.

"We tend to think about Camp Kiwanilong as a camp, not as an arboretum," said Johnson. "I was just intrigued by the idea, and I wanted to lend my support to what I think is a very admirable young man's interest in this historic arboretum."

Trees could use help

For years the arboretum has been a tree museum for kids, said Camp Kiwanilong ranger Trinda Little,



ALEX PAJUNAS — The Daily Astorian
Trinda Little, left, a Camp Kiwanilong ranger, and Luke Colvin, of Arbor Care Tree Specialists, gaze at the size of an incense cedar Oct. 31, a tree that is out of its element on the North Coast. Incense cedars are mostly found in the mountains of southern Oregon and the Sierra Nevadas.

"part of the living, breathing classroom."

The Tillamook-Clatsop Chapter of the Society of American Foresters installed a trail in honor of Astoria forester M.H. "Slim" Schragger and labeled about 60 different species for visitors to identify.

Colvin said without a little help, some of the aging trees in the camp's arboretum are at risk and may even pose a threat to campers on the trail if they fall. With so many species planted so close together, the arboretum isn't like a natural forest, he said.

Competition for sunlight has created some lopsided trees with too many branches — Colvin calls them "redundancies" — on one side, or too much weight at the top of the tree, which he calls "tip weight." Other trees have dead branches just hanging on or branches that have stretched out so far to catch the sun's rays that they're straining the tree trunk.

By trimming just five pounds off the end of a branch, Colvin said, he can relieve the tree of 75 pounds of stress at the trunk.

"The less stress on the tree, the less chance there is of overall failure," he said.

To trim the trees, Colvin launches a climbing rope from a "big shot," basically a large slingshot. After securing ropes to the crotch of a tree, he scales the branches without the aid of potentially damaging gaffs or spikes and uses various