

LIVING

Champs

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the tree is measured in inches. The tree is awarded one point per inch.

■ The height of the tree is measured in feet. The tree is awarded a point per foot.

■ The crown, or spread, is measured from widest to widest points and narrowest. The two results, in feet, are averaged. This number is divided by four to figure the points. In other words, the crown counts only one-quarter as much as the height.

Points from all three dimensions are added to score the tree.

Using this system, Samples' tree scores 78 points. The breakdown: The trunk is 43 inches in circumference. It is 27 feet high, with a 31-foot crown.

That compares to 74 points for the tree pictured Friday, and 77 points for the "co-champ" on Oakhurst Drive. (Trees that score within 10 points of one another are considered equals.)

Samples' tree is on a dogwood trail and has appeared in previous newspaper articles.

But Cortese says other candidates have even better claims to the champion designation.

■ James T Bryant, 416 Richmond Ave., called to say his tree is "bigger than the one in the paper. I can't get my arms around it. It's into the power lines."

Bryant's tree scores 89 points, based on measurements made by Cortese. The breakdown: 49 inches around the trunk, 30 feet high, 40-foot crown.

■ E.W. Peek, 2611 Sherrod Road, has a tree that scores 82½, said Cortese. The breakdown: 40 inches around the trunk, 35 feet tall, 30-foot spread.

■ Carol Moore, 1101, Craig Road, measured her own tree. Based on her measurements, the tree scores 80½. The breakdown: 44 inches around the base, 28 feet tall, 34-foot crown.

"It's a pretty-shaped tree," said Moore. "It goes up five feet before it splits. The top is pretty, round and full all over."

■ Hal Tunnell, 3910 Sullivan Road, said he knew of two trees that might qualify as contenders:

One, at Cedar Lane and Inskip Drive, would score about 75, based on estimates he provided.

The other one, in a private

graveyard off Sullivan Road further complicates the issue. Tunnell said the tree is 75 inches in circumference at the base. But above ground level the tree branches into several trunks.

The tree is about 25 feet high with a 34-foot spread.

■ Amy Ballard, 3438 Ginn Road, has a tree that scores in the 70s, said Cortese.

■ Gwynn Jager, 6106 Manchester Road, has a tree that scored an even 70 points.

Cortese said several people contacted him with red dogwood champions, but he will wait until

next year to include that species on the list.

He said it would be next year before the festival committee designates a new dogwood champion.

"We're going to let the current champs bask in the glory a little while," said Cortese.

Cortese said he enjoys hearing from people who think they might have a champion tree. His number is 522-0533.