

- Observe the type of pruning practices you like, then find out which company does that type of work or use ***FIND A TREE SERVICE*** on this website. Also ask for referrals from your neighbors and garden centers.
 - Verify that your arborist has insurance, is state licensed, and can give references of other similar work. ***TIP: Authentic certificates of insurance ONLY come from the insurance company.***
 - Determine if your arborist is qualified through specialized training, such as formal education and/or ***certification.***
 - Ask your arborist to provide a written proposal for your project that covers the scope of work, procedures to be followed, number of personnel for your job, duration of the job, and how payment will be made.
 - Unless you're comfortable with your present tree service, have more than one arborist look at your job; even if you have to pay a small estimation fee it will be worth your extra effort.
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- Be cautious of a company which is willing to lower prices to match the competition, wants deposits, or recommends removals without good justification.
 - Beware of a company that recommends *topping* as a first choice.
 - Verify that the quality of workmanship and ethical conduct of your arborist meet your expectations and the International Society of Arboriculture's code of ethics.
 - Establish an on-going plan with your arborist to meet long term tree care needs.

REMEMBER: A tree takes a long time to grow but only a short time to permanently disfigure.

Choosing A Tree Care Company

Choosing a tree care service company can initially seem overwhelming. There are a variety of tree companies which make the choice even more confusing. Here is a checklist to help you choose the best tree care service company for your needs.

1. KNOWLEDGEABLE AND QUALIFIED

Does the tree care company employ certified arborists?

2. RESPONSIBLE APPROACH

Does the tree service use sensible products and adhere to strict safety standards?

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Does the tree care company have a good reputation with your neighbors and in the community?

4. PROPER INSURANCE

Is the tree service company insured against damage and injury while on your property?

5. WRITTEN GUARANTEE

Does the tree care company have an unconditional guarantee?

6. SIZE

Is the tree service company large enough to respond to its customers in an emergency?

Take Precautions When Hiring Tree Services to Help With Storm Clean-Up

CHAMPAIGN, IL- Severe storms such as the recent hurricanes can cause major damage to limbs or entire trees, which often results in damage to nearby property. These trees need to be removed or trimmed by a qualified professional in order to lessen long-term damage to the tree and surrounding property.

Finding a qualified tree service is important protection for the homeowner. Sometimes less credible tree companies follow storms for a quick buck and blow out of town as fast as the storm. Knowing how to hire a reputable arborist can help prevent becoming a victim all over again.

A professionally trained arborist can determine if a tree can be saved. Even if the tree must be removed, safety and training are still needed to prevent additional damage from the removal. Most chainsaw injuries occur during storm cleanup.

In a time of disaster, a fast recovery is desirable, but not taking the time to hire a reputable tree service may create greater problems in the future. The worst result of haste may be paying in advance for tree work that is never completed. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) offers these tips on hiring an arborist.

How to find a qualified arborist

When searching for a tree care company, there are several things to look for before making a selection.

- **Certification-**Ask if the arborists on staff hold an ISA certification. ISA offers a range of certification credentials from Certified Tree Worker/Climber Specialist to Board Certified Master Arborist. To be certified individuals must pass a voluntary comprehensive exam. Certification must be maintained through continuing education, which means they should be up-to-date on the latest in arboricultural technology and are knowledgeable of acceptable practices.
- **Licensing-**Some states require licensing for tree care companies operating within that state. Louisiana and Mississippi, two states hit recently by hurricanes, both require tree companies to be licensed. Licensing usually requires passing an examination and/or earning continuing education credits. Check your state's requirements, and make sure companies you are considering are in compliance. In some states licensing is the only necessary requirement. Therefore, this could super-cede ISA Certification as a requirement to look for; however, if a tree care company from out of state is offering services you should look for ISA credentials.
- **Professional Affiliation-**Ask about membership in professional organizations such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and/or one of its chapters. There are also state arborist associations such as the Louisiana Arborist Association (LAA), and the Professional Arborist Association of Mississippi (PAAM). Affiliation with industry

organizations demonstrates a willingness to stay up-to-date on the latest techniques and information.

- **Advertisement-** Check the local yellow pages directory, or newspaper for arborists who list themselves as ISA Certified Arborists, state licensed, or who display the official logos of professional membership. Also look for logos of business accreditation by organizations such as The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), who requires they have an ISA Certified Arborist on staff. Most reputable tree care professionals do not go door to door soliciting business, so avoid those companies that show up at your doorstep offering to prune your trees. If a tree care company from out of state is advertising, it is even more important to look for these logos of professional identification.
- **Insurance-** Ask for proof of insurance and then verify coverage with the insurance company. A reputable arborist should have insurance to cover personal and property damage as well as worker's compensation. If you hire an uninsured tree expert, you can be held liable for any damages or injuries that occur while they are on the job. If you hire a company that is from another state, verify that his insurance covers him for work done in your state.
- **References-** Ask for references from past customers and do not hesitate to check them, or to visit the locations where the company or individual has done tree care work.
- **Estimates-** Do not be afraid to ask for an estimate, and it is ok to get more than one estimate. You should not always select the lowest bid. When examining the bids, you should look at all specifications and credentials, and the work to be done to determine which company will provide the best service with the skill and professionalism needed to protect your investment. And most importantly get it in writing. Most reputable arborist will have the customer sign a contract so be sure to review it and do not be afraid to ask questions.

It is important to remember that good tree work by qualified professionals is worth the additional expense; however, poor work, no matter the price paid, can cost you a great deal in the long run. Professional prices should include liability and workman's compensation insurance, and may also include the use of bucket trucks and equipment. There may also be pricing that includes heavier specialty equipment that may be needed such as cranes, loaders, etc., or hardware that may be installed in the tree. If you feel an estimate is high, do not hesitate to ask what the price includes, you may realize you are getting much more bang for your buck than what a less expensive tree service is offering.

Take the time to be an informed consumer and prevent yourself from becoming victimized.

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), headquartered in Champaign, Ill., is a nonprofit organization supporting tree care research and education around the world. As part of ISA's dedication to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees, it offers the only internationally-recognized certification program in the industry. For more information, and to find a local ISA Certified Arborist, visit www.treesaregood.com.

Tree Limbing: How to Hire Tree Services for the Job

When would consumers be advised to hire tree services? Reflect upon the following image:

A tree limb crashing through a window, sprinkling glass all over the living room carpet! Surely an occurrence to avoid, right? But what if you need to have tree limbing work done in order to let more sun into a garden area? If you undertake your tree limbing project **yourself**, you risk precisely that occurrence, when the tree in question looms over your house like the fabled sword of Damocles. Clearly, tree limbing is not a project to rush into. Even the most ardent do-it-yourselfer will probably want to defer to the expertise of tree services on this one. The problem is: How do you locate tree services? And once you've located them, how do you separate the wheat from the chaff for a difficult tree limbing job?

Caveats When Hiring Tree Services

Certainly, an all-purpose handyman driving around a neighborhood in a pickup truck with a chainsaw and hollering out sales pitches may not be suitable for work demanding such a high level of responsibility.

Sponsored Links

[Tree Trimming Experts Local Tree Services Near You Request Free Estimates Online Nowwww.TreeServiceDirect.Com](http://www.TreeServiceDirect.Com)

[Find a Tree Care Company Search for companies Accredited by TCIA for high quality service.www.TreeCareIndustry.org](http://www.TreeCareIndustry.org)

[Tree Removal Affordable Tree Service Online Trimming, Removal, Stumpwww.coletreeservice.com](http://www.coletreeservice.com)

Also be wary of hiring tree services requesting payment in advance or who wish to begin work without having drawn up a free estimate of the cost. In fact, consumers should demand not only an estimate but also a written contract, laying out precisely what the tree limbing job entails and for how much. If limbing work needs to be performed on a tree whose appearance is important to you, always insist that tree services climb the tree using ropes or ascend with an aerial lift (see photo at right) rather than using climbing spikes. Spikes cause damage to the [cambium](#) of a tree.

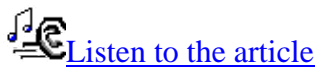
For dangerous work such as this, tree services' demonstrated possession of adequate insurance may well be the consumer's primary consideration. Request to see certificates of liability and workman's compensation insurance, and check that they are current. Phone the insurance company to verify current policy information.

Also ascertain how prepared tree services are to take appropriate action in the event that a mishap occurs. For instance, tree services removing limbs situated directly over wires leading into your house should have experience in splicing together damaged wires. Skilled tree services control the fall of such limbs using ropes. Should an accident still occur, however, you don't want the inconvenience entailed by having to call a utility company.

Hiring Tree Services: Word of Mouth and References

Finally, it never hurts to do some asking around on your own. If word of mouth spreads fast, then tales of woe spread like wildfire. If a neighbor knows a friend of a friend who once had a tree limb arrive unexpectedly on the living room carpet, accompanied by a shower of glass, due to the incompetence of a tree service, chances are you'll hear about it. Conversely, tree services worth hiring will benefit from word of mouth and will be glad to provide a list of phone numbers of local clients satisfied with a job well done. As when dealing with any professional who will be working around your home, don't be afraid to ask for references from tree services.

How to Select a Tree Service



An unqualified tree trimmer, in the blink of an eye, can esthetically and physically ruin a tree that has been growing for decades. Before hiring a tree service, do some research into proper pruning techniques or possible solutions for the tree problem; this information will help you to ask the right questions. Here are some general guidelines for choosing an arborist.

- Be certain the person you hire has the necessary training to do the job. How did they receive this training? Is the person certified by at least one international, state or local professional arboriculture association? How many years has this person been in the business? If pesticides are needed, is the person certified to apply them?
- Request copies of the company's certificates of insurance and workmen's compensation. Request several references, and verify them. Ask if the job was performed on time. Was there any damage done to the house, wires, lawn, or other plants? Did they do a complete clean up? Were all promises kept?
- What is your initial impression of the company? Are the personnel neat and safely attired? Is the equipment in good repair? Did you make the first contact, or did they call on you? Be wary of any crews using the "we are working in the neighborhood..." method of getting business. Be wary of any crews not from the area. Be especially wary of alarmist tactics, filled with unsolicited advice.
- Ask the following questions:
 - How will they climb up into the tree? This might seem a silly question, but the answer is very important for the continued health of your tree. Unless the entire tree is to be removed, the trimming crew should never, ever, climb up into your tree using cleats. Cleats create a multitude of unnecessary wounds all along the trunk, wounds that may give insects or disease entrance to the tree. A skilled arborist will climb into the tree using a combination of ropes and ladders. No cleats, please!
 - Ask where the company will make their pruning cuts. Compare their answers with your research. Remember the Extension Office can provide you with valuable information about how a tree should be pruned. The prospective contractor should be familiar with drop-crotch pruning, and where to prune with respect to the branch collar.

- Especially after ice, wind or snowstorms, one other term that might creep into the conversation is "topping." If a contractor suggests "topping" as a pruning solution, don't hire him. Topping will only create serious problems.
- Many apparent problems can be interpreted in different ways. You should obtain several qualified opinions about the problem.
- Obtain more than one estimate. Each estimate should detail how the contractor foresees doing the job, and what equipment will be used. Cost is an important factor, but the science and art with which an arborist trims and prunes is extremely important to the well being of the tree and to whether it is a safe tree.
- Obtain a detailed written contract, which states when the work will be done, and precisely what that work entails. If any chemicals are to be sprayed, be sure that information is included, as well as the environmental impact of the chemicals. Lastly, the total dollar amount should be specified. Do not ever pay in advance.