

Hiring a Tree Service

What is a Tree Service? A tree service is a company in the business of taking care of trees, providing services such as pruning, planting, removal and general health care. Be wary of cut-rate offers or door-to-door solicitors of tree care services.

What is an Arborist? An arborist is a specialist in the care of individual trees. Arborists are knowledgeable about the needs of trees and are trained and equipped to provide proper care. Hiring an arborist is a decision that should not be taken lightly. Proper tree care is an investment that can lead to substantial returns. Well-cared-for trees are attractive and can add considerable value to your property. Poorly maintained trees can be a significant liability. Pruning or removing trees, especially large trees, can be dangerous work and should be done only by those trained and equipped to work safely in trees.

What is a Certified Arborist? A Certified Arborist has at least 3 years of tree care experience and has passed an examination testing his or her knowledge of arboriculture. Certified Arborists are required to complete 10 hours of continuing education each year and to stay up to date with researched information. Certification provides a measurable assessment of an individual's knowledge and competence required to provide proper tree care. However, certification is only a measure of knowledge, not a measure of skill.

Services That Arborists Can Provide

Pruning – Arborists can provide pruning necessary to a tree's health, appearance, and safety. These techniques include eliminating rubbing branches, limbs interfering with structures, weak or hazardous branches, diseased or infested limbs, or dead wood. Arborists are also trained in restructuring the canopy and improving the shape of a tree, and training young trees for good structure and form. Tree topping and removal of large limbs is usually detrimental to tree health and generally not recommended.

Removal - Although tree removal is a last resort, there are circumstances when it is necessary. An arborist can help decide whether a tree should be removed. Arborists have the skills and equipment to safely and efficiently remove trees. Removal may be recommended when a tree is dead, dying, hazardous, obstructing or crowding causing harm.

Planting - Although arborists can plant trees, most will only recommend an appropriate tree for a specific location. "Right Tree, Right Place" is the best approach to avoiding future poor tree health related to insects or disease, or growth problems due to lack of space or poor growing conditions.

Other Services - Many arborists also provide a variety of other tree care services, including cabling, pest control, fertilization and preventative maintenance.

Selecting the Right Arborist for Your Job - Here are some general questions and things to think about when you hire an arborist. Remember that trees are an important urban resource and deserve good care. Choose wisely.

Do you provide free written estimates? Get estimates from more than one company.

Are you licensed in my city?

Do you have liability and worker's compensation insurance? Ask for proof of insurance.

Are you a member of any professional organizations?

Be sure to understand what the arborist plans to do and why.

Be sure to articulate exactly what you want done and why.

Get a written estimate; know the total price and when payment is expected. Have a written contract for the work to be done.

If additional work is desired, know what it will cost (e.g., hourly rates).

Know who is responsible for clean up.

Know when work will start and is expected to finish.

Look at some trees arborist has pruned to see if you will be satisfied with his job.

Inquire about the reputation of the arborist--ask friends, neighbors and co-workers whom they recommend or have used with success.