



Ways To Have Confidence In Who You Select To Care For Your Trees

July 31 2021 7:15 AM



URBANA, Ill. — Trees are large components in the landscape, both in size and life span. When pests, pathogens, or disorders appear or a tree is not cared for properly, the compromised tree can harm people or property.

Hiring someone to assess tree healthcare needs helps ensure the long-term health and safety of trees in the landscape. Choosing the right tree care company for your needs can mean the difference between an expensive headache and money well spent.

Certified arborists are trained and qualified in evaluation and diagnosis of tree disorders through the [International Society of Arboriculture](#). An arborist certification means they know about the science of tree establishment, pruning, safety, and fertilization in accordance with [national standards](#).

“Before hiring, we recommend the tree owner assess their needs,” says [Sarah Vogel](#), a [University of Illinois Extension](#) horticulture educator. “What do they need? Identification, diagnosis, pruning, or removal? An Illinois Extension office can help clarify that process.”

When diagnosing a tree, a reliable tree care company will ask questions such as when the tree was planted, how and when it has been pruned, what symptoms have been observed, and any recent nearby construction. Make note of symptoms and their timeline for easy reference.

Some companies specialize in regular maintenance, such as fertilizing or pruning hedges. Pruning fruit trees or pruning a limb over a building may warrant work from two different companies. If a tree needs to be removed, ask how and when the company will access the yard. Take precautions to minimize damage to surrounding structures, trees, lawns, and other objects.

It is important to confirm the company is insured. Insurance can protect both the tree service and the homeowner from litigation if there is an accident. Liability insurance covers damage to homeowner property and worker’s compensation insurance covers injuries to employees while working. Ask for proof of insurance before any work begins.

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions,” says Vogel. “Tree care can be costly, and a considerate professional will take time to explain the process.”

Ask for and check referrals and references. A brief conversation with another customer can often provide valuable insight. Online reviews are handy but don’t always paint the whole picture. Tree care can be expensive. Get two to three written estimates and ask the same questions of each company: cost, services included, equipment used, payment terms, and time estimates. Cheap doesn’t always mean good.

Ask for a contract if one is not offered. This holds both parties accountable in the event of miscommunication. Homeowners and tree service professionals should agree on what tasks will be performed and when.

Companies should require the use of personal protective equipment and all crewmembers should follow national safety standard guidelines. This is not the client's responsibility to enforce, but they can specify that all work be performed according to safety standards.

When considering credentials, ISA-certified arborists on staff are recommended, but not required. The arborist may belong to a local chapter or other professional associations. These memberships do not guarantee quality, but they do show professional commitment. There are other credentials that go beyond regular terms of service to show outstanding ability and commitment, such as AED and CPR training, emergency aerial rescue certification, powerline safety certification, and climber safety certification.

A knowledgeable tree care professional will do the job well, satisfy their customer, and ensure the longevity of the tree. To find a certified arborist in your area, visit [International Society of Arboriculture](#), [Tree Care Industry Association](#), [American Society of Consulting Arborists](#), [Illinois Arborist Association](#), or contact your [local Extension office](#).