

# Guidelines for Hiring a Tree Service



Caution is advised when hiring a tree service company. The tree service industry is unregulated, so persons who go into business as tree care specialists do not need professional licenses or certification. Consequently, the quality of work delivered by tree care companies can range from excellent to very poor. Choosing a bad company can be costly and result in great harm to your trees and property. Choosing a good company will ensure the health, beauty, and safety of your trees, as well as your own peace of mind.

## ***How to Find a Tree Service***

### **Professional organizations**

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) provides a list of licensed arborists on their website: [www.isa-arbor.com/findarborist/findarborist.aspx](http://www.isa-arbor.com/findarborist/findarborist.aspx). The Ohio Chapter of the ISA can also be contacted by phone, (614) 771-7494, or online at their website: [www.ohiochapterisa.org](http://www.ohiochapterisa.org).

### **Word of mouth**

Talking to friends, neighbors, and family is a good place to start, or check the yellow pages.

### **Better Business Bureau**

When you find a company, call the BBB to check on any complaints that may have been filed against the company.

### **Reputable businesses DO:**

- ✓ Try to save a tree first and recommend removal as a last resort
- ✓ Have employees who are certified arborists with the International Society of Arborists and/or Tree Care Industry Association accredited
- ✓ Use clean, modern equipment and neat, polite employees



- ✓ Provide copies of their insurance policies on request
- ✓ Provide all types of tree care services including pruning, fertilizing, mulching, cabling, bracing, pest control, lightning protection, and tree appraisal

### Reputable businesses do NOT:

- ✗ Solicit door to door -- they stay busy by repeat business or referrals from satisfied customers
- ✗ Top trees -- topping, rounding, heading, whatever they call it, the practice is the same; tree limbs are cut back to stubs much like a hedge is sheared which causes severe damage
- ✗ Use boot spikes to climb a tree that is not going to be removed
- ✗ Ask for any payment in advance

### Negotiate a Contract

Obtain a written, signed contract from the company that clearly defines the work to be performed. The contract should include starting and completion dates and a specific work description. Example: "Prune out all dead and dying limbs 1.5 inches or greater in diameter." If the tree is to be treated with chemicals, list the type of chemical, how much, and at what rate it is to be applied and what disease or insect problem the application is treating. If fertilizing, list the application rate, the formulation (10-6-4, etc.) and how many pounds per tree. Specify what is to be done with the material removed and who is responsible for it. State how high remaining stump material will be cut. Stump grinding is usually not included in a removal bid. If stump grinding will be done, specify whether the stump and surface roots will be ground to one foot below grade, and whether the chips will be replaced with topsoil and the area re-seeded. Include the total dollar amount that will be charged. Always read the fine print. Be sure you are not signing a commitment to future work if all you need is a one-time service.

### Insurance Coverage

Ohio law states that a property owner may be held liable for the medical expenses of an injured worker whose employer is not paying into state workers compensation. This is one of the biggest reasons to request an official copy of the companies' insurance and workers compensation policies. Call the insurance company to verify their coverage is current. Remember, most homeowner policies do not cover damages from tree work, so don't hire a company that claims so.

