

Forestry Division

Advice for Hiring a Tree Service

Hiring a tree service deserves careful consideration. A qualified tree service will do tree work properly and safely. An unqualified person may actually damage the tree. Unqualified persons may not have proper insurance, leaving a liability burden to the customer that could run into the thousands of dollars.

Remember the following points when hiring or contracting with a tree service/arborist:

- Check your telephone directory's yellow pages under "Tree Service" for a listing of those businesses which do tree work in your area. While anyone can list themselves in the phone book, a listing at least indicates some degree of permanence. Be cautious of any arborist that advertises "topping" as a service. "Topping" is not an approved tree maintenance practice under normal conditions and will seriously damage the tree.
- Ask if they employ any certified arborists. Certification is not required but it does indicate that they may have a significant degree of knowledge.
- If the tree service/arborist you are considering is not certified, determine if he/she is a member of any professional organizations, such as the Nebraska Arborists Association, the International Society of Arboriculture or the National Arborists Association. Membership in these and other professional organizations does not guarantee quality, but does indicate professional commitment.
- If appropriate, ask for certificates of insurance, including proof of liability for personal and property damage and worker's compensation. Then, contact the insurance company to make sure the policy is current. Under some circumstances, you can be held financially responsible if an uninsured worker is hurt on your property or if the worker damages a neighbor's property.
- Ask for local references, look at some of the work, and if possible, talk with former clients. Experience, education and a good reputation are signs of a good tree service.
- If possible, get more than one estimate. And possibly mention to the services that you are getting multiple estimates.
- Be sure you understand what work is to be done for what amount of money. It is not generally a good idea to pay in full until the work is completed.
- Most reputable tree care companies have all the work they can handle without going door to door. People who aren't competent arborists may solicit tree work at your door pointing out a condition that needs "immediate attention" or the "tree will die." If a tree is that close to death there is probably nothing that you or anyone else can do about it. These kinds of people are most active after storm disasters.
- Good tree work will not be inexpensive by any means. A good tree service must carry several kinds of insurance as well as pay for expensive and specialized equipment. Beware of estimates that fall well below the average. There may be hidden costs or the arborist may not be fully insured or trained.
- A good pruning job is often one that cannot be noticed after the work has been done. A proper tree removal includes the stump and full clean up and leveling of the site.