



HOW TO SELECT AN ARBORIST OR TREE SERVICE

Hiring an arborist deserves careful consideration. A qualified arborist will do tree work properly and safely. An unqualified person may damage the tree further and more importantly, may not be insured, leaving the liability burden on the client. This liability can run into tens of thousands of dollars.

Research

Check the phone directory's Yellow Pages or do an Internet search on "Tree Service" for a listing of businesses that do tree work in your area. A listing in a directory indicates some degree of permanence. Also check company websites for association memberships, licenses held and insurance information. The Nebraska Arborists Association website allows you to search for certified arborists in your area.



Reputable arborists carry insurance and use expensive, specialized equipment.

Be Cautious of "Topping"

Be cautious of any arborist who advertises "topping" as a service. Topping, as defined by the International Society of Arboriculture, is the "indiscriminate cutting of branches to stubs or lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role." Topping is not an approved tree maintenance practice. Other names for it are "heading," "tipping," and "rounding over."



Reputable arborists will not "top" a tree. It spurs the growth of epicormic shoots and robs a tree of the ability to produce food.

Certifications

Ask for proof of certification by either the Nebraska Arborists Association or the International Society of Arboriculture. Certification is not required by the State of Nebraska, but it indicates that the arborist has a high degree of knowledge.

If the arborist is not certified, determine if he or she is a member of any professional organizations, such as the Nebraska Arborists Association, the International Society of Arboriculture or in professional groups. It does not guarantee quality but indicates professional commitment.



Arborist certification is not required in Nebraska. An unqualified person may damage the tree further and more importantly, may not be insured, leaving the liability burden on the client.

Insurance and References

Ask for certificates of insurance, including proof of liability for personal and property damage and workers' compensation. 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 damages a neighbor's property.

Ask for local references. Take a look at some of the work and, if possible, talk with former clients. Experience, education and a good reputation are signs of a good arborist.



Take Your Time

Don't rush into a decision just because you are promised a discount if you sign an agreement now. Be sure you understand what work is to be done and the cost. It's generally not a good idea to pay in full until the work is finished.



Sales Practices

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 after storms, seeing an opportunity to earn quick money. Storm damage creates high-risk situations for both workers and property. Legitimate arborists never ask for payment in advance.



Get a Second Opinion

If possible, get more than one estimate for the work to be done. A conscientious arborist will not use climbing spikes except when removing a tree. They open unnecessary wounds that can lead to decay. Good tree work is not inexpensive. A good arborist must carry several kinds of insurance and pay for expensive, 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.