

# HIRING TREE CARE PROFESSIONALS

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I have heard a saying that goes something like this, "If you need to go up a ladder to prune a tree with a chain saw, you need to hire a Certified Arborist!" When hiring a tree expert, you should take care to obtain the services of a qualified arborist who has the skills, knowledge, and training necessary to work with your trees. Trees in the landscape add value to your property and should be maintained so that they are safe and healthy. Do you have a tree that needs some work done on it? Are you concerned about the storm-worthiness of a particular tree? Read on!

Risky tree care is nothing that amateurs should attempt. In fact, many homeowners are hurt each year trying to do their own dangerous tree work. Arborists, sometimes known as "tree surgeons", have the knowledge, training, and equipment to complete this risky work. By law, they are required to wear a hard hat, gloves, goggles, chaps, and proper footwear to help stay safe.



*Certified arborists are trained to safely climb and restore damaged trees.*

*photo courtesy of <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>*

There are two categories of tree experts to consider, depending on the degree of work complexity - a Tree Care Professional and a Certified Arborist. Tree Care Professionals with sufficient equipment and insurance can perform jobs such as taking down trees in open areas and removing dead or dangerous branches. You need a Certified Arborist (as certified by the International Society of Arboriculture) if you need to remove a leaning tree that is near a target (a house for example), when climbing is required, when a tree must be restored in order to save it, and when proper pruning is required for good structure.

When you need a qualified Arborist, there are some specific questions that should be asked and satisfactorily answered. Is the individual a Certified Arborist certified by the ISA? This is certainly a good starting question as a Certified Arborist is required to demonstrate professional experience, knowledge, and application of the best and latest techniques of the industry. Certified Arborists also keep on the cutting-edge of their trade by continuing education and up-to-date training on the most recent research.

Keep in mind that only qualified line-clearance arborists are allowed to work near electric lines. If a

*(Continued on page 2)*

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*The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. UF/IFAS does not guarantee or warranty the products named, and references to them in this publication do not signify our approval to the exclusion of other products of suitable composition.*

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tree or limbs have fallen on a power line, call the power company to report the incident.

There are certain standards that Arborists follow as spelled out by the American National Standards Institute. The ANSI produces two guidelines that tree care professionals should be familiar with. For instance, ANSI Z133.1 highlights safety standards for tree care companies. Another guideline, ANSI A300, outlines the best management practices concerning pruning and other similar tree care procedures.

Insurance is critical and you should ask the person if they are insured for property damage, personal liability, and worker's compensation - ask for documented proof. You may be held responsible if you hire an uninsured company and have to pay for the medical bills and lost wages of those hurt. Hand-in-hand with insurance is the aspect of written estimates. Proper equipment,

skills, and insurance may cost more but the investment will be worth it. Get more than one written estimate and review the procedures, equipment, price, and time that are quoted.

If you feel that you must be involved in some part of the tree work, consider doing some of the clean-up. Keep in mind that you should not use a chain saw if you are not experienced or physically unable to do the work. If you do use a chain saw, only use it while on the ground. Don't do any work that involves bringing trees down, climbing, or using ropes - this must be left to the professionals!

For more information on finding a Certified Arborist in your area, take a look at [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) or call (888) 472-8733.

Resource:

Kampf, E., Delgado, A. & Duryea, M. (2007) *Get the Right Tree Care Professional*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

For more information on all types of tree questions, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte.

MONTHLY PLANT CLINICS ARE SATURDAYS FROM 9:00AM-12:00PM.

- **Powell's Nursery** ..... 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of month
- **Peachland Publix**..... 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of month
- **Home Depot (Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte, Englewood)**..... 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of month
- **Lowes** ..... 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of month

PLANT CLINICS AVAILABLE ACROSS THE COUNTY:

- **Demonstration Garden** (6900 Florida Street, PG) Thursdays 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** Thursdays 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Punta Gorda Library** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of month from 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.
- **South Gulf Cove Learning Garden** (13577 Blake Drive, PC) 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of month from 9:00am-12:00pm.

Ralph Mitchell ([Ralph.Mitchell@charlottetfl.com](mailto:Ralph.Mitchell@charlottetfl.com)) is the County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for Charlotte County Extension Service. Contact a volunteer Master Gardener from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 941.764.4340 or by email ([Master.Gardener@charlottetfl.com](mailto:Master.Gardener@charlottetfl.com)).

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4351. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.