

Hiring an Arborist to Prune or Remove Trees

Why do I need an arborist?

If you have trees on your property that you cannot reach without a ladder, or are tempted to use a power chain saw above the ground, you are ready for an expert in tree care. Don't hire a lumberjack to prune your trees. Trees that are well maintained add value to your property and deserve professional care.

Who is an arborist?

An arborist takes care of individual trees. Arborists are well trained, know what trees need, and have the right equipment and skills to do safely the dangerous work that a homeowner should never undertake. They can determine how to prune your trees to improve their look as well as health and safety.

How do I find an arborist?

There are several organizations that maintain lists of arborists you can choose:

New Jersey Certified Tree Experts complete courses in tree biology and train in tree climbing and the use of equipment before they are certified. Each CTE has a number often mentioned in the yellow pages ads, but do check if it is current. You can find them at:
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/community/cte.html>

International Society of Arboriculture runs a Certified Arborist program that requires an extensive examination covering all aspects of tree care. You can find their list at: <http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/findarborist.aspx>

Membership in organizations such as Tree Care Industry Association <http://www.treecareindustry.org/>, or the American Society of Consulting Arborists <http://www.asca-consultants.org/> is also a good indication of professional standing.

Check Liability Insurance and References

Request proof of insurance. A reputable arborist will have personal and property damage insurance and worker's compensation insurance.

Also ask for local references that you can easily check.

Estimates

Get a detailed description of the job in writing and then compare estimates. Make sure you know who is responsible for cleanup. It can be a back breaking job if you do it. Ask for hourly rate in case you want to add to the job described in the estimate.

Beware

If someone mentions topping or climbing your trees using spikes (unless the trees are dead), stay away. These are harmful practices. Topping (severe cutting of main branches) is also called rounding-over or heading. Topping is not only ugly but also expensive. It causes stress, unbalanced growth, decay, sunburn, and creates hazards. For more on topping go to:

<http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/topping.asp>