

Selecting an Arborist in Kansas

The services of a certified arborist are needed when a job is beyond the skills of an individual or city employees, or specialized equipment is needed to safely prune, evaluate or remove trees. While many people can perform work needed for young trees, the needs of large-tree care often require the services of a tree-care professional.

Certified arborists are professionals in the care of individual trees. It is encouraged to use certified arborists who have demonstrated competency and ethical and technical attributes for tree care. Certified arborists in Kansas have completed training, passed a certification exam and possess a minimum of two years of practical experience applying sound and proper arboricultural practices. They also maintain property damage and personal liability insurance, and receive continuing education. Most certified arborists have or can obtain the appropriate equipment to do tree work safely.

The Kansas Arborists Association publishes a membership list that can be obtained from Charles Long, 785-499-6670 and at their website <http://www.kansasarborist.com/search-the-directory.html>. The International Society of Arboriculture website provides a searchable database of certified arborists at <http://www.isa-arbor.com/certification/verifyCredential/index.aspx>. The International Society of Arboriculture offers tips for selecting a tree service or arborist. These tips can save money and help avoid hiring the wrong company.

Read these carefully before hiring.

- Check in the phone directory, usually under Trees, Tree Service, or Tree Care Service. Although anyone can list themselves in the yellow pages, a listing indicates some degree of permanence.
- Beware of door-knockers. Most reputable companies have all the work they need without going door-to-door.
- Ask for evidence that they actually work for the company, rather than moonlighting.
- Never be rushed into bargains, such as “if you sign an agreement today, I can take ten percent off the price.”
- Never pay in advance. *Ask for certificates of insurance, including proof of liability for personal and property damage and workers compensation.*
- Ask for local references from other jobs the company has performed. Take a look at these and, if possible, talk with the former clients. *Experience, education and a good reputation are signs of a qualified arborist.*
- Determine if the arborist is a member of organizations such as the American Society of Consulting Arborists, International Society of Arboriculture, Kansas Arborists Association or the Tree Care Industry Association (formerly the National Arborist Association). Membership does not guarantee quality, but lack of membership casts doubt on the person’s professionalism.
- Have more than one arborist look at the job and provide estimates.

Making an Agreement

The terms of an agreement are usually made verbally. To prevent misunderstanding and be assured of the work agreed upon, get a written agreement. Most companies have their own form. Listed below are several key items that a written agreement or contract should include:

- Date the work will begin and end
- Exactly what work will be completed. For example, prune all dead, dying, diseased and weak branches one and one-half inches or greater in diameter. Does the quote include removing the stump?
- Specify what cleanup will be done and when.
- The total dollar amount you will be charged.

Choosing an arborist with experience, training with continued education and a good reputation is a very important step in taking care of our tree resource.

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