

“Why Hire a Certified Arborist?” – Fall 2007

Choosing a tree care specialist can be a difficult task. In most cases, due to state law, all it takes for someone to claim to be a tree care specialist is a truck, trailer, and a saw. “There are many things to take into consideration when choosing who to hire; experience with similar projects, references, project scale, and insurance and licensing” says Dr. Mark Follis of Follis Tree Preservation. Budget should never be the main deciding factor for whom you hire. For example, it does no good to hire the cheapest person for the job if he ultimately destroys property or worse, injures someone. Due to its very nature, tree care is a highly dangerous job. Consider that a section of red oak 30” in diameter and 1 foot in length weighs approximately 309 pounds. Multiply that by how many feet it is to a main limb and pounds turn into tons. The dangerous nature of the work alone would merit hiring a certified arborist.

While anyone can claim to be a tree care specialist, few have taken the time to educate themselves to be just that. International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborists are required to pass a lengthy certification exam covering all aspects of tree care including, but not limited to, tree biology, tree identification, tree/soil relations, water management, nutrition and fertilization, pruning, tree support and protection systems, diagnosis and plant disorders, tree assessment, trees and construction, safety, and climbing. “Certified Arborists are also required to attain 30 CEUs or continuing education units on topics related to arboriculture” said Dr. Follis. This continuing education can be obtained by attending conferences or workshops and represent a commitment to the tree care industry and to clients. Wes Hopper, of Urban Forestry here in Memphis and also Vice President of the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council is quick to say that “there are many great tree care professionals that are not Certified Arborists, and that because you are a Certified Arborist does not mean you are a qualified tree care specialist. However, it does show that you’ve gone above normal standards of attaining the appropriate level of education to be a professional tree care specialist”. It doesn’t make any difference how much experience you have, if you have been practicing incorrect tree care. That’s why the ISA Certified Arborist program focuses on strict adherence to research based occupational standards. ISA Certified Arborists are also held to a strict code of ethics.

Trees in the urban environment need professional care, before they start to decline. Often, seeking professional tree care after a tree has started to decline can be too late. Remember, a five hundred dollar treatment is better than a two thousand dollar removal and the loss of what it took nature close to a century to develop. In many cases certified arborists can come to your site, assess your tree care needs, and give an estimate of project costs. So, why not hire a certified arborist? There is no good reason not to. You will save money in the long run by providing your trees with proper care now and preventing any problems in the future. Look for the Certified Arborist symbol or ask your



tree care professional for their certification number. [®] A Certified Arborist will be proud to show you his card. While the City will not require or suggest a specific Certified Arborist, we do highly recommend the attainment of the professional services of an ISA Certified Arborist. To find a Certified Arborist in your area, check out the ISA's website at <http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/verifyArbByPostal.aspx>.