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Hiring an Arborist: Tips on Finding a Tree Expert

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A certified arborist can advise you on care for special trees, such as oak trees.

SUMMARY

An certified and bonded arborist should be contacted to assess and maintain trees.

Information about certified arborists can be found at ASCA or ISA websites. As always, ask questions.

Q: I do not want to lose a beautiful old oak tree on my property, however, a large branch has crashed down. Whom do I call to come out to assess its structural soundness, overall health and to recommend any necessary maintenance on the tree?

A: UC Master Gardeners cannot recommend private tree care companies. We can, however, provide you with some direction on how to find a specialist to help you.

Who are you looking for?

The specialist you are looking for is an arborist. An arborist is an individual who is trained in the art and science of planting, caring for and maintaining trees.

Typically, a person who advertises as an arborist has taken classes on tree care and has demonstrated knowledge and expertise with a record of several years of journeyman work.

The best assurance of getting quality advice is to hire an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboricul-

ture (ISA), or a consulting arborist who is a member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).

Certification from either society requires a level of continuing education to maintain certification, so the certified arborist is more likely to be up to date on the latest techniques in arboriculture.

Certified consulting arborists typically provide only advice, while ISA-certified arborists are usually on staff or owners of a tree service company. Most homeowners usually work with ISA-certified arborists.

Where do you find an arborist?

If you would like more information about each of the organizations or assistance in finding a certified arborist, the websites of these organizations can help you. Visit:

<https://www.isa-arbor.com/> and
<https://www.asca-consultants.org/>

Be aware that certification does not guarantee quality performance. It is only a means of helping you select an arborist



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who has demonstrated a level of knowledge and technical proficiency.

If it is a tree care service you need, they are usually listed under "Tree" in the Yellow pages of the phone book. Many local tree services can also be found on the Internet. If they have a certified arborist on their staff, they will usually indicate this in their advertising. Except for the certifications already noted, there are no industry or government standards for people calling themselves an "arborist" or providing "tree services".

- Ask neighbors, family or friends for recommendations.
- contact and interview at least three individuals or companies.
- make sure contractors are knowledgeable about the service you are requesting.
- make sure the individual or company has the required licenses, registration, certificates and insurance.
- ask for references & check them out.
- get an estimate for the work.
- get all agreements in writing.

Your trees are part of the value of your property. As a homeowner, taking care of the health of your trees will protect that value. Using the appropriate arborist or tree service will help you assure that your investment is protected.



Oak Tree Failure. Photo by Larry Costello, courtesy of the University of California Statewide IPM Program