

## Hire A Good Arborist for Tree Issues

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Aug. 1, 2018

**Q:** I have a large oak in my yard. Recently I have noticed that one of the branches is dying and I am concerned that it could fall and cause damage to my garage. Can you recommend a good arborist?

**A:** Our Master Gardeners office is often asked this question. We understand that trees are very important to the beauty and functionality of your yard and can also have a big impact on the value of your property. Improper pruning can permanently damage a tree, so you want to make sure that you hire someone knowledgeable to work on them. However, because University of California regulations prohibit Master Gardeners from recommending specific products or services, we cannot recommend a particular arborist.

That said, here are some helpful guidelines so you can find the right person/business for your job.

First, be aware the city of Redding has a tree ordinance that regulates the removal of certain trees. Your large oak may fall under this ordinance. If you're in the county, there are state regulations about removing conifers and trees that are close to waterways. Regulations for removal of conifers from your property may require a permit and/or services of a registered professional forester. These rules generally do not apply within the 100-foot defensive space clearance area around your home mandated by state law. A certified tree care company should be able to help you with any permits required. For pruning, no permits are necessary.

When hiring a tree-care business, you should look for one that's certified. There are two national oversight groups that certify individuals and businesses dealing with landscape trees. These are the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA — [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)) and the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA — [www.treecareindustry.org](http://www.treecareindustry.org)). Both groups have lists of certified companies or individuals on their websites to help you find local specialists.

The following definitions come from the websites of these two groups: Arborists – According to the ISA, a certified arborist must have “three or more years of full-time, eligible, practical work experience in arboriculture and/or a degree in the field of arboriculture, horticulture, landscape architecture, or forestry from a regionally accredited educational institute,” and have passed an ISA exam.

Tree care companies, TCIA-accredited companies, are inspected and qualified based on “adherence to the TCIA Code of Ethics and best business practices, employing formally trained, skilled personnel, meeting industry standards for quality performance and safety, providing industry-standard written estimates, customer satisfaction, including following a dispute-resolution process, carrying sufficient insurance coverage and employing certified arborists”

There are different types of arborists. Some arborists may assess the property and perform the physical acts of cutting needed branches and trees. Others provide advice and oversee workers doing the cutting. Some only make recommendations and leave it to the homeowner to select a tree service. Not all tree services employ an arborist, but I recommend that you hire a tree service that does.

When hiring a company, make sure to verify the business carries liability and workers' compensation insurance, as well as required licenses. Get an estimate and a contract that provides specifics about what work and what cleanup will be done. Request, and check out, references and verify that the arborist who

gives you the bid will actually oversee the job. Ask friends and neighbors for recommendations if they have had tree work done.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*