

ELEVEN TIPS FOR SELECTING AN ARBORIST

Check in the phone directory, under Trees, Tree Service or Tree Care Service, but be selective. Please understand that anyone can list themselves in the yellow pages. Look for certification. There are 61 New Jersey Certified Tree Experts available who work in Bergen County.

Beware of Door-knockers. Most reputable companies have all the business they can handle without going door-to-door. "Door-knockers." are especially common after storms when non-professionals see a chance to earn some quick money. Often, storm damage creates high-risk situations for both workers and homeowners, and there is opportunity for even more damage to trees and shrubs if work is not done correctly.

Never let yourself be rushed by bargains. i.e., "if you sign an agreement today, I can take ten percent off the price..." and never pay in advance.

Ask for certificates of insurance, including proof of liability for personal and property damage (such as your house and your neighbor's), and workman's compensation. Then phone the insurance company to make certain the policy is current. Under some circumstances, you can be held financially responsible if an uninsured worker is hurt on your property, or damage is done to a neighbor's property!

Ask for local references or other jobs the company or individual has done in you area. Take a look at some, and if possible, talk with the former client. Experience, education and a good reputation are signs of a good arborist.

Determine if the arborist is a member of any professional organizations. Membership does not guarantee quality, but lack of membership casts doubt on the person's professionalism.

If arborist certification is available in your area, determine if the arborist complies with the requirements. The International Society of Arboriculture offers a national certification program.

Good arborists will offer a wide range of services, (pruning, fertilizing, cabling-bracing, lightning protection, plant health care, etc.)

Smart arborists will recommend topping a tree only under rare circumstances (such as to save the tree after severe physical damage to the crown, or for a specialized decorative effect.)

Conscientious arborists will not use climbing spikes if the tree is to remain in the landscape.

Beware of an arborist who is eager to remove a living tree. Removal should be a last resort.