

# How to Find an Arborist

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Recently, I was asked by a retired couple to look at some trees on their property that an “arborist” they called said needed to come down. The trees were not perfect, they were older water oaks but the “arborist” in this case told them “that the orange growth (lichen) growing on the bark of their tree was killing it and that if they did not take the tree down the disease on their tree would start to affect the wood in their home”. This information is absolutely false. My hope is that the “arborist” was uninformed and not preying on this couples fears. Granted, I was not there and am simply repeating what the couple told me but after I talked to them I felt the need to write this article.

Diagnosing tree problems is a very specialized skill. It takes a lot of observation and study to get it right. Working and climbing in trees can be very dangerous and requires a lot of technical skill. Professional arborists should have those skills. The term arborist has been misused lately by some folks in the tree care industry. The definition of an arborist is a professional who is trained in the art and science of planting, caring for, and maintaining trees and other woody plants. Many folks claim to be arborists, yet do not have the necessary skills. Instead of hiring an arborist, you may decide to do the work yourself. Even if you know where and how to prune trees, if the tree pruning requires the use of a ladder or your feet are not firmly on the ground, you should hire an arborist.

Arborists should be qualified, knowledgeable and be able to communicate effectively with their clients. By following these steps, a tree care consumer can feel more confident that they have hired the right person for the job.

## The following are some tips to help select a qualified arborist:

- If they say they are going to top your trees, don't hire them.
- Have more than one arborist look at the job.
- Ask for written specifications on what they want to do.
- Ask for and check references. Someone that does a good job welcomes showing off their work.
- If it is recommended that a living tree be removed, make sure you understand why and agree.
- Do not choose someone solely on price. Insurance and specialized equipment are expensive and typically the better arborists have higher overhead costs.
- Try and use an ISA Certified Arborist. Certification does not always guarantee a quality arborist, but there is a good chance that an ISA Certified Arborist is a professional that will utilize the most current tree care practices. You can find an ISA Certified arborist by going online at [www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com) and clicking on the “Find an Arborist” link.
- Check for Liability and Workman's Compensation insurance by asking for the phone number of their insurance company and calling them to verify coverage.
- Ask them when the last training session they went to was, and what was the topic.

