

Good Tips When Hiring Tree Trimmers



Spring is here again. For most of us it's the time of 'coming back alive' and so it invites attention to a hundred different projects that may have been put off with winter's excuses. And every spring our trees come back into leaf and the deadwood that partly hid from us through the winter's gray drizzle becomes very visible again, sometimes not so subtly suggesting that preemption may be one key to disaster avoidance.

When you begin to think of shopping for needed tree work, there are a number of points to keep in mind. The list below is not comprehensive but is none-the-less useful.

- Your trees have value and need periodic pruning about every 3 –5 years. This first one is probably self-evident but you might be surprised how many folks just let it slide. Regular pruning and deadwooding prevents multiple problems that can sometimes become irreversible.
- Don't be entirely sold on the basis of the cost of the work alone. Compare apples and apples. Full service can sometimes cost more, but like most other things, you get what you pay for.
- To help ensure knowledge and a quality result, look for company memberships in national professional organizations and



supervisor/worker arborist certifications. Increasingly the International Society of Arboriculture's Certified Arborist credential is a mark of standardized training and quality.

- Be sure that liability insurance and workers' compensation are in place and adequate. Upon request, the salesman will have their insurance company send you a certificate via U.S.mail. It is not something 'the tree guy' keeps in his glove box.
- Except for removals and/or for emergency rescue use, do not allow crews to climb your trees with steel spikes on their feet. This wounds, defaces, and can also open entry or infection points for various subsequent problems.
- 25 % to 30% is a recommended limit on green foliage/bud removal in one growing season. Except in extraordinary circumstances, **do not** allow your trees to be 'topped'. Topping is NOT an accepted arboricultural practice. Aside from the stress aspect of removal of sugar producing leaf tissue, topping creates multiple additional problems, including abnormal form, rot points, and weak failure prone attachment of the re-growth. Another common

mistake is known as "lion-tailing", which is the practice of excessive interior pruning that gives the branches a heavily pruned "show poodle look." While many clients like this effect, making them believe that they got good return for their money, the practice tends to retard limb taper, thereby denying the progressive development of structural strength in the scaffold limbs.

- Ensure properly finished pruning cuts. There is a legitimate pruning target point just outside the limb collar. The limb collar itself is very often identified by a swollen point at the base of the limb where it joins the parent limb or trunk. **Cutting too close** makes a literal flush cut. This creates an excessively large wound that takes extra time to close and as well, removes a pathological barrier point that otherwise inhibits rot migration into the parent limb. **Cutting too far out** leaves a stub, which prevents wound closure and provides an entry point for decay. If made correctly, pruning cuts generally do not need to be painted with anything. 'Sealants' are generally ineffective and often retard or slow callus development and wound closure.
- Curb stacking is illegal and unprofessional. Professional contractors finish the job. Don't be taken in by the offer of 'a cheaper price' to leave debris on the curb. This could also be a tip-off for workers willing to take short cuts in others areas as well.

Did You Know . . .



. . . that **the root systems of your trees** in most cases extend far beyond . . . sometimes twice . . . what is usually identified as "the drip line." Also, those same root systems are surprisingly close to the top of the ground, especially in clay soil like we have here. This means that extra care and planning is needed and may be critical when contemplating any project or installation activity that requires digging, trenching, grade changes (reduction/cutting or filling/adding), or tilling. Little blond fibrous lacy filaments just a couple of inches under the surface are actually the terminal ends of your tree's lifeline. Sever those, scrape those or smash those and little or no water moves up your tree. Then a bit later the top(s) may begin to wilt or turn brown. "Fixing it" after the fact is not so easy.

. . . that our tall oaks are prime #1 candidates for warm weather **lightning strikes**. Large oaks are struck by lightning more than any other tree type **a.)** because of their size and height and **b.)** because they carry so much water aloft in their scaffolds and branches. Water is a prime attractant for electrical groundings. The extreme heat generated during a strike instantly boils the water in the tree's cambial structures and explodes it in the same way the top can be blown off a kettle over a fire. This also explains why most strike events create long vertical strips that run down the tree to the ground and may not splinter the interior wood of the tree. This can also fry those little roots hairs without a lot of visible damage. While not guaranteeing total protection, lightning protection systems installed correctly in large important trees can ground such a discharge and be a significant help in minimizing potential damage.