



# How to Hire an Arborist or Tree Care Company



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A qualified arborist or tree care company can help you decide how to best care for your trees or when a tree should be cut down. Use these guidelines to help you find an arborist or tree care company.

## Does my Tree Need to Be Removed?

- **Here are some signs that you should cut down your tree:**
  - Dead branches in the tree or on the ground.
  - Mushrooms near the base of the tree.
  - Excessive leaf loss or dead leaves.
  - Areas of rotten wood or cavities.
  - Noticeable change in the leaning of the tree.
- If a dead or dying tree is on your property, you should remove it immediately if it is a danger to your home or people. Before you cut it down, make sure the tree isn't on an easement or other protected land.
- If a dead or dying tree isn't a danger to people or buildings, you can leave it on your property. Dead trees help wildlife and the ecosystem as they decay.



## Who to Hire

- Check for membership in professional organizations, such as the International Society of Arboriculture, the Tree Care Industry Association or the American Society of Consulting Arborists.
- **Look for companies that employ certified arborists.** You can check for certification online at [www.goodtreecare.com](http://www.goodtreecare.com).
- Ask for proof of insurance. This includes personal and property damage insurance, as well as worker's compensation insurance.

## What to Do Before Hiring

- Get more than one estimate and don't always accept the lowest bid.
- **Make sure to get it in writing and read the contract carefully.** Does the contract cover everything promised?
- Beware of individuals who go door-to-door, offering bargains.
- **Find out who is responsible for disposing of the entire tree,** including limbs and debris. Will the stump be removed? You may be able to save money by recycling the wood from your tree. To learn how, contact Fairfax County's Forest Pest Branch for more information.

**Get more information at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/trees.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/trees.htm).**

For more information or to request this document in an alternate format, contact the Fairfax County Forest Conservation Branch, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518, Fairfax, Va. 22035, 703-324-1770, TTY 711.

*Photo courtesy of Thomas B. Denholm, New Jersey Department of Agriculture and [www.bugwood.org](http://www.bugwood.org).*