

Questions to Ask When Hiring a Tree Service

When it comes to tree care, some jobs may be too big and can be very dangerous. Rule of thumb: unless you can work with both feet on the ground, you should hire a professional tree service. Working from high altitudes requires proper training and protection due to risky variables such as electrical wires and structures such as fences, buildings or homes. Hiring a tree service comes with its own set of risks as well. To get your money's worth and protect your property and trees, you need to ask your tree care professional these important questions and make sure you understand and agree with their answers.

Can they provide an up-to-date certificate of insurance (WORKERS COMP & General Liability) and a copy of document showing work to be completed? This should be your first and most important question. You want to make sure they are properly insured and that you will not be liable for any damage, accidents or injuries.

Are they a Certified Arborist or can they prove to have completed work that requires that level of knowledge and experience? Try to hire a company with experience; large commercial jobs, municipalities or government work are a big +! Will they be working close to electrical wires? If so, they will need to prove such experience and have the proper tools and equipment.

Can they provide several references? Any quality company will be happy to share a list of satisfied customers. Ask for customers that they have done work for in the past month or so; you don't want ancient history.

Will they give you a detailed estimate? Get written estimates from at least three equal companies to compare prices and understand the scope of the job, which leads to the next question.

How will the job be approached and what equipment will they use? You DO NOT want massive power equipment driving over your lawn and flowerbeds causing collateral damage. If they are going across your lawn, make sure they know the locations of sprinkler heads or other objects that may be damaged. What is their policy if they damage something and is it acceptable to you? It may be a good idea to take pictures before they begin so you have a record just in case there is damage. Make sure you understand how they will clean up during and after the job.

How long will the project take? This is why getting an estimate is VERY important. One company might say three days while another company says three hours. I would be worried if a two quote the job to take 2-3 days and one says 2 hours, unless they explain how or why it will take them less time to complete it; they may have more equipment or a significantly larger crew. Also, I would be concerned if a contractor shows up, asks for other bidders quotes and

automatically underbids every other contractor without analyzing the job at hand themselves.

Does the company appear professional? What do their company vehicles/equipment look like and is it well taken care of? Is it clean and in good shape? If they don't take care of their equipment, do you think they will take care of your tree and property? Do they have a website? Design and content can give you a sense of their professionalism, as can the appearance of the vehicles they use on jobs. That can give you an idea of how they run their business.

Do they use spikes to climb trees while pruning? Unless you're removing the trees, demand they not use spikes, which causes unhealthy wounds.

Do they advertise "topping" (removing large live sections from the top of the tree)? This is another poor practice, especially for large, healthy hardwood trees and would indicate that you should continue your search.

Will the crew be using hardhats and other personal protective equipment while on your property? Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that personal protective equipment be used for any tree care operation. A reputable tree care service will require their workers to be protected.

It is important to protect yourself and your property by hiring a tree care professional for dangerous jobs. It's also very important to protect yourself and your "tree investment" by asking these important questions.

Some contractors are after the big payday while other provide the type of service that will keep them in business for years to come with a great reputation in their area, search engines such as Google, their BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU (BBB), etc...

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