

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Forest ReLeaf of Missouri
1-877-40 NO TOP
(877-406-6867)
Or 888-473-5323

Choose a Certified Arborist

Selecting professional tree care in Missouri can be as risky as buying mulch or firewood from those door-to-door guys in pickups, and a lot more costly in the long run.

While a bad choice of mulch or firewood can be altered after one season, the selection of inappropriate tree care could lead to the quick death of a favored tree, which could have lived to be more than 100 years old with proper care.

“In our state there are tree care professionals and there are tree cutters,” said Lisa Allen, State Forester, Missouri Department of Conservation.

Tree cutters tend to be untrained, uninsured, inexperienced, minimally equipped and many are in business briefly.

Tree care professionals typically belong to one or both of two organizations — the National Arborist Association (NAA) and the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). The ISA conducts extensive courses and certifies those who pass an industry-based exam.

“Since there is no regulatory group for tree care professionals — full- or part-time — in Missouri, people in this profession work on the honor system,” Allen said.

No regulation means it is not against the law for a firm to advertise that it is a “tree specialist,” or that an individual is an “arborist.” Specialists don’t even have to be members of either the NAA or ISA.

“In tree care, as in medicine, there are generalists and specialists. A good rule of

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thumb is to see how a firm advertises what it does. Deciding on which tree to plant in a setting may call for one expertise; pruning or maintaining older trees, another.

Additional things to look for are insurance affidavits and ISA certification,” Allen said.

One real test may be whether or not a tree service advertises that it “tops” trees.

“Topping — the severe cutting back from the top or side of a tree — resulting in the sudden growth of ugly shoots or sprouts and premature death of a tree, is widely practiced in the state. Some homeowners even insist on it because they think it is the right thing to do. But it is the worst thing that a property owner can do to a tree,” Allen said.

Ironically, some services advertise that they “top” trees in local service directories or telephone yellow pages.

“If they say they ‘top,’ don’t let them come near your trees,” Allen said. “When seeking professional tree service companies, ask for a visual example of how they will prune your trees. If they’re hesitant, find another service. It’s wise to select an ISA Certified Arborist.”

Proper pruning, and in some cases complete removal of existing trees, may be the best prescriptions for particular situations.

“Considering the investment in trees, the beauty and environmental benefits — as well as the financial considerations (property value) — tree care should never be decided by the first person to reach your door with a chainsaw,” Allen said.

For the name of an ISA Certified Arborist in your area or other tree care advice, call 1-877-40-NoTop (1-877-406-6867).