



Leaflet #2



How To Choose A Tree Care Company



The
Neighborhood
Tree
Program

Beware Of Tree Care Companies That Go Door To Door Soliciting Work!

Individuals or companies calling themselves "tree specialists" may come to your home looking for work. While providing enticingly low prices, they are often unqualified, unlicensed in the City of Falls Church, uninsured, and present a liability and danger to you, your home, and your trees.



Criteria for Choosing A Tree Care Company

In the City of Falls Church, tree care companies must have a City license to work.

The City requires tree care companies to carry insurance and workmen's compensation and to bond their work to protect citizens. Homeowners are advised to investigate any tree care company for quality of work and ethical practices before hiring them. Get several quotes and request references from prospective companies. The City advises caution on hiring any company that:

- Drives from house to house asking to do tree work.
- Uses spikes on shoes when pruning trees.
- Offers topping as one of its services. ("Topping" is the drastic removal or cutting back of large branches in mature trees, ultimately resulting in the early death of the tree.)

Pruning and removing trees by unlicensed and non-professional tree care companies can:

- Increase your financial liability for worker injury on your property.
- Cause the unnecessary removal of trees that could have been saved.
- Further weaken trees that in the future may cause property damage or personal injury.

Follow these guidelines when hiring a tree care company:

1. To ensure the tree care company you are hiring is licensed to do work in the City of Falls Church, call 703-248-5183 or e-mail jspence@ci.falls-church.va.us. Do not take the word of the company. Many companies claim they are licensed in the City when they are not. The City's list of licensed tree care companies also identifies those companies that employ International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborists.
2. Ask to see the contractor's current membership in professional organizations such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborist Association (NAA) or the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).
3. Ask if individual workers are certified through the ISA Certified Arborist program.
4. Request proof of insurance.
5. Request a list of references. (Don't hesitate to check!)
6. Ask if they "top" trees or use spikes on their shoes. They should say, "No!"
7. Get a written estimate listing all work to be completed, including the cost of removing brush and debris. (Brush left by a contractor will not be picked up by the City.)
8. Do not pay for the job until everything agreed upon is completed.

For further information about the importance of arborist certification and to locate a local arborist, go to the ISA website at <http://www.isa-arbor.com>.



10 Good Reasons to Select a Qualified Tree Care Company

- 1. To protect yourself against fraud.**
- 2. To prevent your trees from becoming hazardous to you, your home, and your neighbors.**
- 3. To obey the laws of the City of Falls Church. (Companies not licensed by the City will be asked to stop work.)**
- 4. To prevent you from unnecessarily having trees removed that could be saved.**
- 5. To prevent damage to your trees that may require further costly work.**
- 6. To reduce the risk of lawsuits from worker injury.**
- 7. To prevent increases in your insurance rates resulting from increased insurance claims.**
- 8. To prevent the increase in illegal, dangerous, and unethical tree companies.**
- 9. To beautify your yard.**
- 10. To increase the number of healthy, oxygen-producing, pollution-absorbing, shade-providing trees in the City of Falls Church.**

The goals of the Neighborhood Tree Program are to increase the number and quality of street trees in the City of Falls Church and to educate our citizenry on the value of trees. The program was initiated in spring 2000 by the Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society (www.vpis.org) and is operated under the guidance of the City Manager and the City's Urban Forestry Division. Call 703-248-5183 for information.