

Selecting the Right Person to Trim Your Trees

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A few weeks ago a friend of ours who lives outside our service area asked me about how to choose someone to trim his trees. His inquiry came in like this...

We'd actually like a filtered referral. A couple of years ago a friend at church hired a tree trimmer and afterward felt that both he and his tree had been scalped. How do we decide if a big franchise or landscaping company will do any better or worse than a man with a rope and a chain saw? What questions should we ask?

In thinking through an answer, I realized his were **good questions** that needed a careful response and that many others might benefit from the answers. With that in mind I am sharing how I responded to him:

I would avoid landscape companies to do tree trimming, with rare exceptions they are ignorant of horticultural practices that help woody plants (aka: trees and shrubs) This is very sad, but in our experience, very true. I would look for a family owned tree care business that boasts of ISA Certified Arborists. It's no guarantee, but it is a good start. Then I would ask, who will be on the job? Will the people doing the actual trimming be certified or just employees of the company several tears removed from the people who are in the know? Just as a comparison, our trimmers are ISA certified arborists and many of them have advanced degrees in horticulture or a related field. It makes a HUGE difference in the quality.

Then ask them about "how" they trim. If you call our office ([847-634-7734](tel:847-634-7734)) and tell them you are a friend and have spoken to me), and request how to access the trimming abstracts on our website or ask for them to be mailed to you. We have three abstracts on trimming, short, easy to read and with lots of pictures;) which will assist you in asking the right questions. They should never take more than a 3rd of the branches out, preferably less. They should never use spikes when they are climbing because it is very damaging to the tree. Find out about their qualifications and experience, don't be afraid to ask, a good firm should welcome that! We specialize in saving and maintaining trees and although we do have to remove trees from time to time as a service to our clients, it is not



Gilbert A. Smith, ISA Board Certified Master Arborist climbing and trimming a Maple tree.

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something we advertise or enjoy doing. You want a firm that loves trees not one that loves taking them down!

Finally, insist on a certificate of insurance!! Low bid is kind of a mute point if you have a tree in your bedroom or over your garage or worse an injured worker on your property with no health care coverage. Having insurance for workers is expensive, but it is a sign that the company cares, not just about you, but about their staff as well.