

## When Do I Need an Arborist?

To decide if you need the services of an arborist, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I want shade trees?
- Are my trees healthy and vigorous?
- Do I believe in preventing problems through planning and regular maintenance?
- Are any tree limbs dying?
- Is the soil around the tree compacted?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, an arborist can help keep your trees healthy and give you peace of mind.



Louisiana licensed arborists receive specialized training in a variety of topics, including tree root care. Shown here, an arborist uses an auger to aerate the soil around the roots of a tree.

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# Hire an Arborist for Residential Tree Care



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Trees on home grounds or in parks are assets to everyone. Trees also are long-term investments for property owners. Like any investment, trees require effort to maintain their value. That means tree owners must make careful decisions about care and maintenance, which may require the occasional advice and service of a professional – an arborist.

## What Is an Arborist?

An arborist is a person who makes a career of caring for landscape and community trees. Some arborists are self-employed, others may work or consult for tree-care companies, municipalities and utility companies. Regardless, arborists are professionals concerned with the planting and the care of trees.

Arborists can help with an array of tree-care practices, including transplanting, pruning, fertilizing and managing pests. Most arborists also are skilled in tree removal and value appraisals.

Consulting arborists are a bit different. These experts offer advice but usually do not provide the actual services. They specialize in appraising, diagnosing problems and recommending treatments. Other times they are the legal experts who help settle disputes in court cases.



Professional arborists have special skills that allow them to work on your tree in a manner that minimizes damage to the tree and promotes its health.

## Tips for Hiring an Arborist

Beware of “door-knockers” who might show up just after a storm when they see a chance to earn quick money. When hiring an arborist, take these precautions:

- Ask to see the arborist’s state license and make sure that it is current by calling the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (see below).
- Don’t let anyone rush you by offering a bargain.
- Ask the arborist for a client or reference list so you can assess his or her workmanship.
- Get copies of proof of insurance. State law requires a minimum of \$25,000 general liability. You may wish to make sure the person you hire also has property damage insurance and worker’s compensation. Call the insurance companies and confirm coverage.
- Obtain more than one written bid, but don’t expect one arborist to lower the price to match another’s.
- Beware of an arborist who is too eager to remove a living tree, but keep in mind that a living tree is not always healthy or structurally sound.
- Get current information about any Louisiana licensed arborist you are considering hiring from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Call 225-952-8100.

## Get a Contract

State law requires arborists to provide a written contract specifying the services to be performed and the sum to be paid. A standard contract between the tree owner and the arborist should contain key elements. When examining the document:

- Check for the dates the work will begin and end.
- Look for the total dollar amount you will be charged.
- Expect to see a thorough description of the work.
- If you are getting your tree fertilized, make sure the contract specifies the type of fertilizer, the application rate and the method of application.
- If you are getting your tree sprayed for pests, get details about specific insects or diseases being treated, the chemical and quantity to be used and what you need to do in advance of the treatment. Remember, pesticide operators must have a special license to use pesticides.
- Make sure the contract spells out the details about cleanup. Who gets the firewood? If you are getting the firewood, who will cut and stack it? Who is responsible for removing small-diameter debris? Check to see local laws regarding large debris pickup and disposal.
- Make sure the arborist grinds the stump to 1 foot below grade and backfills with topsoil.

