

# Choosing a Tree Care Professional



**P**roperly pruned and maintained trees add value to our properties. In fact, recent studies indicate that trees add at least 7% to a property's value. In San Antonio, a mature and properly maintained pecan or live oak tree, for instance, **will** have an appraisal value of \$10,000 or more!

However, improper maintenance can impact our trees' health, creating a safety hazard. To ensure that your trees remain assets and not liabilities, carefully choose a tree care professional. Here are several sample questions to ask.

**1. Do you have a City of San Antonio Tree Maintenance License?** In San Antonio, all individuals or tree care companies must be licensed. And to maintain their license, they must obtain continuing education credits insuring that they are receiving up-to-date information on tree care and diseases for the San Antonio area. You can ask to see a valid Tree Maintenance license or verify status by visiting the website at [www.sanantonio.gov/dsd/licensing.asp](http://www.sanantonio.gov/dsd/licensing.asp)



**2. Do you have General Liability Insurance?** A "Tree Service", company may advertise that they are insured and even state in their advertisement "Insured For Your Protection". Verify that they have a general liability policy and not just a property liability policy.

Here's the difference: A property liability policy only covers damage to the home or other property, such as a car or fence. But what happens if a person is injured? The

property owner could be liable. Only a general liability policy protects the homeowner from such a mishap.

Ask to see the policy. Is it current? Does it have the company's name on it?

**3. Will a Certified Arborist be supervising the crew or do you have a Certified Arborist on your staff?** An arborist is a professional trained in the art and science of properly managing and maintaining individual trees, and in some cases woody shrubs and vines.

To be considered an arborist, a tree care professional must be certified by a recognized tree care professional organization. One such organization, and perhaps the most widely known, is the **International Society of Arboriculture**. To find a list of ISA Certified Arborists in your area, visit [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com).

The **San Antonio Arborists Association** is another organization dedicated to improving the quality of tree care, the health of San Antonio's trees and the level of professionalism in the San Antonio tree care industry. The SAAA encourages its members to become certified with the ISA.

Membership in such professional organizations is often a good indicator of

skill on the part of your tree care individual or company.

**4. Will the work be performed in accordance with the ANSI-A300 Standard?** Just like electricians and plumbers, tree care professionals have a set of published standards that outline the right and wrong ways to conduct tree pruning and removals. These standards also include specifications for cabling, lightning protection, fertilization and more. In the San Antonio area, trees are often improperly pruned. Several of the most common improper pruning techniques are topping, stripping interior foliage, stubbing and "de-mossing". These practices are in violation to the City of San Antonio's Tree Preservation ordinance as they severely damage trees and in addition, often create a liability.

The ANSI-A300 Standards are designed to protect the health and beauty of your trees. Your tree care person should adhere to these standards.

**5. What Personal Protective Equipment do your crews use and do you provide safety training for your crews?** Tree maintenance workers are to follow the national ANSI Z.133 Safety Standards Tree maintenance can be very hazardous work. Verify your tree company has a safety program in place,

and that they require the use of basic personal protective equipment, such as hardhat and safety glasses and if a chain saw is in operation, ear protection and chainsaw chaps.



**6. Do you have any references?** Most reputable tree companies will gladly refer you to several addresses in your neighborhood and/or greater community where they have completed work.

**7. Does the individual who is providing the quote have a professional appearance?** The person you are dealing with should be prompt, courteous, knowledgeable about your trees, and should provide you with a detailed written estimate outlining the work.

**8. Is the quote specific, clear and well written?** Often the quality and specificity of the quote itself is an indication of professionalism.

**9. Storms and Emergencies.** Have a tree company picked out well in advance, so that in the unfortunate event of storm damage to your trees, you are much less likely to fall prey to the countless "storm chasers". Ask for the same insurance certificates and qualifications as if it were routine work.

**Oak Wilt** Most communities including the City of San Antonio have an ordinance that all oak wounds including those from pruning, require painting within 30 minutes. This provision is the community's primary tool in preventing the spread of the oak wilt disease. For more information, visit this website: <http://www.texasoakwilt.org/>

**Bulk Trash Notification.** You may have the contractor place the material at the curb if you have received notification via the yellow door hanger stating "it's your turn" for brush collection or you may request a quote and schedule a brush pick-up by calling 311 inside the City of San Antonio.

*This brochure is sponsored by the San Antonio Arborists Association and the City of San Antonio.*

