

Hiring an Arborist

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Since so many have dead ash trees in the landscape due to emerald ash borer, I thought that a few comments on selecting an arborist might be timely.

Actually the real reason for this column is that my husband was approached by an arborist last week for an estimate to trim some of our trees. What ensued was sort of disturbing!

The guy just happened to be in the neighborhood and noticed that we had some trees with dead branches in the top.

He stopped and told my husband that he could give him an estimate to trim the walnut trees. He also pointed out that the dead branches were due to the fact that they weren't getting enough oxygen.

Now I don't have any problem with someone stopping by offering the service. What disturbed me about this was that the trees were black locust and it's not uncommon to have dead branches and broken limbs on this species.

Misinformation and the lack of knowledge disturbs me. If you are going to have a quality business, take the time to learn tree identification as well as to learn how plants function. Education is a key to success in this industry.

It also disturbs me that this type of practice is not uncommon and that people do hire someone, trusting that they know what they are doing.

So let's get back to my main point about hiring a qualified arborist. Do your homework.

First, if someone shows up at your door, telling you that there is something wrong, be suspicious. Qualified professional arborists don't work this way.

Ask questions and don't make a decision that day. Ask for references and if they are licensed bonded and insured.

Ask if they are ISA certified and to see these credentials.

ISA is the International Society of Arboriculture and the national certifying organization. There is a rigorous testing process that one has to go through to become ISA certified. In addition, they have to attend continuing education courses to maintain this certification.

Many of our communities work hard to ensure that there are qualified ISA certified arborists on staff.

I know that sometimes you can get the work completed for less money by some of these door to door tree companies. I would encourage you to think about the cost versus the risks.

If they are taking a tree down in your backyard, what happens if the tree falls on the house? Who is responsible?

Choosing a reliable arborist to treat your trees for pest problems is equally as important. Again, do your homework about the pest in question and determine if pesticide treatment is really necessary.

That's where your local Extension office comes into play. We can help you identify a pest problem and provide you with the information for you to make a decision if treatment is needed.