Keep 'em healthy from leaf to roots

Trees are good. At least, that is what the International Society of Arboriculture believes. They believe it so much, they set up a site on the web with exactly those words — www.treesaregood.com.

I know what you are thinking. Who is the International Society of Arboriculture and why do they care so much about trees? According to the website, the ISA is "a worldwide professional organization dedicated to fostering a greater appreciation for trees and to promoting research, technology, and the professional practice of arboriculture." Why do they believe trees are good? Well, trees are their business.

With Hurricane Ivan looking to be heading towards the U.S. now, it is a good time to start looking at how some of your trees in your yard are doing. Many of our trees in our area have withstood Hurricane Hugo in 1989, the ice storm of 2002, the drought years two years ago, and many, many other environmental conditions.

When you have back problems, you see a chiropractor. When you have migraine headaches, you see a neurologist. So when your trees need to go in for a check-up, who do you need to call?

Certified arborists are trained professionals that are extremely knowledgeable about trees. They offer many services — disease and insect management, pruning, tree removal, emergency tree care, planting, and tree maintenance — such as fertilization, spraying, and aeration.

When looking to hire a arborist to assess your trees, there are many factors you need to consider. The following list is from the www.treesaregood.com website:

- Membership in professional organizations — such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the Tree Care Industry Association, or the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) — demonstrates a willingness on the part of the arborist to stay up-to-date on the latest trends and information.
- Check the phone directory for those arborists who advertise as ISA Certified Arborists or display the official logo of the ISA Certified Arborist. Certified arborists are experienced professionals who have passed an extensive examination covering all aspects of tree care.
- Ask for proof of insurance and then phone the insurance company if you are not satisfied. A reputable arborist will have personal and property damage insurance as well as worker's compensation insurance.

See Dungan/Page 2F
Many homeowners have had to pay out large amounts of money for damages caused by unscrupulous individuals claiming to be tree experts. You could be held responsible for damages and injuries that occur as a result of the job.

- Some governmental agencies require contractors to apply for permits and/or to apply for a license before they are able to work. Be sure they comply with any local, state, provincial, or national law that governs their work.
- Before you hire a company, you should find out where the company has done work similar to the work you are requesting. Don't hesitate to check references or visit other work sites where the company has done tree work. Remember, tree care is a substantial, long-term investment; you would not buy a car without a test drive.

- Unless you know and are comfortable with the arborist, you may have to pay for the estimate, and it will take more time, but it will be worth the investment.
- Be wary of individuals who go door-to-door and offer you a low bid. You should examine the credentials and the written specifications of the firm that submitted the bid and determine the best combination of price, work to be done, skill, and professionalism to protect your substantial investment.
- Get it in writing. Most reputable arborists will have their clients sign a contract. Be sure to read the contract carefully. Don't be afraid to ask questions, such as:

  - Who will be responsible for cleanup?
  - Is this the total price? If it were in writing, would it be more to be done, what is your hourly rate?
  - Remember trees are good.

- But if they are weak, structurally unsafe, or may potentially cause structural damage,