

# Keep 'em healthy from leaf to roots

**T**rees 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](http://www.treesaregood.com).

I know what your 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.



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Successful Gardener

With Hurricane Ivan looking to be heading towards the U.S., now is a great 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 problem, 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 from pruning, tree removal, emergency tree care, planting, and tree maintenance — such as fertilization, spraying, and aeration.

When looking to hire an arborist to assess your trees, there are many factors you need to consider. The following list is from the [www.treesaregood.com](http://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 techniques and information.
- Check in 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



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continued from Page 1F

Many homeowners have had to pay out large amounts of money for damages caused by uninsured individuals claiming to be a 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.

■ Ask for references to find out where the company has done work similar to the work you are requesting. Don't hesitate to check references or visit other worksites where the company or individual has done tree work. Remember, tree care is a substantial, long-lasting investment; you would not buy a car

without a test drive.

■ Unless you know and are comfortable with the arborist, get more than one estimate. You may have to pay for the estimates, and it will take more time, but it will be worth the investment.

■ Be wary of individuals who go door-to-door and offer bargains for performing tree work. Most reputable companies are too occupied to solicit work in this manner. Improper tree care can take many years to correct itself, and in some cases, it can never be corrected. Are you willing to take that risk with your valuable investment?

■ Good arborists will only perform accepted practices. For example, practices such as topping a tree, removing an excessive amount of live wood, using climbing spikes on trees that are not being removed, and removing or disfiguring

living trees without just cause are unnecessary.

■ Don't always accept the low bid. You should examine the credentials and the written specification of the firms that submitted bids 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:

When will the work be started and completed?

Who will be responsible for clean-up?

Is this the total price?

If I would like 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,

then they aren't so good. Certified arborists love trees, but if they feel they need to come out, there is probably a good

reason.

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