

Hiring a Tree Service

Ask questions thoroughly and get estimates.

Before you hire a tree service company, decide what you want done to your trees, because the services performed by different companies varies considerably.

Services offered...

Tree service companies offer services such as, cabling and bracing, insect and disease spraying, fertilization, pruning, tree removal, stump grinding, cavity filling, and related services.

Full-service vs part-time

You may find that you will want a full-service company because the employees are generally better trained. A full-service company can perform more than one type of operation, and if at a later date, additional service is needed or your trees have a different problem, you can call on the company with which you are familiar.

Check references

Once you decide which service you need for your trees, decide on which company you want and check it out. Ask for references... the hour or so you spend checking out a tree service is not likely to make any difference in whether your trees live or die.

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Liability insurance...

Ask about the type and amount of liability insurance the company carries. Many tree trimmers have little or no liability insurance. If you hire a company which doesn't carry liability insurance, you will be responsible for injuries or damages incurred to or by the tree trimmers while they're working on your property.

Get estimates...

Get a written estimate from more than one tree service. Ask what the price includes because you can get varying prices depending on whether the tree service company cleans up the mess, whether the wood will be left or

resold and in the case of spraying the trees, who will provide the water. Five-hundred gallons of water through your water meter could be an expensive hidden cost.

Carefully analyze all the information you can get when you're selecting a tree service and don't be pressured into something you don't need.

For more information on hiring a tree service; contact your local County Extension Office.

Protecting Trees During Construction

Saving trees around a house or building that you're constructing is a big plus for beauty and the pocketbook.

You probably enjoy the shade and beauty trees offer, but you may not know saving trees saves money. Shade trees cut cooling and heating costs, and can add from five to ten percent to the real estate value of a home.

Unfortunately, many who try to save trees around a new home or building are disappointed later when the trees die. But, with careful construction your trees can survive.

Construction damage kills...

The number one killer of trees during construction is damage. Those clearing your lot sometimes damage the roots or trunks of trees. Or, they may smother the roots by packing the soil with heavy equipment or with fill dirt over the roots. To make way for concrete slabs and driveways, construction crews sometimes cut roots, and installing underground utilities or grading the lot can cut roots.

Most of the vital feeder roots of trees are in the top foot of soil and extend even beyond the drip line of tree branches.

Supervise closely...

You must be firm with the builders. Even then, supervise them closely. Insist on proper care during lot clearing. Build barricades around trees to prevent damage. Crews may need to clear most of the lot by hand and use heavy equipment only on the house site itself.

Clear lots during dry weather. Heavy equipment damages roots more during wet weather.

You have to begin planning even before the lot is cleared. If you buy a "spec" house from a builder, you may be disappointed a year or two later to find he was not careful, and your trees are dying. You are faced with the expense of removing dead trees. If you paid a higher price for the lot because of the trees, you've also lost your investment.

Have equipment enter and leave the site from one location, preferably the driveway site.

Try to have underground utilities laid away from tree roots. But, if they have to pass close to a tree, insist that corridors be tunneled under major roots instead of trenched. You should ask to have all utilities laid in one corridor, if possible.

If you have to change the drainage pattern or grade of the lot, use retaining walls to protect your trees.

For driveways, walks, or patios that extend over root zones, use a pervious material such as turf-stone, gravel or shell.

If you're thinking about buying a house already under construction, look for symptoms of construction damage. Look for

injuries to tree trunks, exposed or cut roots, a slab too close to trees or a patio surrounding them. Other clues are thinning and yellowing of leaves, or die-back at the top or on branch ends.

Sometimes trees can be doctored back to health after construction.

Corrective care...

Fertilization, watering and aeration of compacted soils are all good medicine for trees suffering from construction stress. Other aids are wound repair, dead limb removal and pruning to compensate for root loss.

For more information on protecting trees during construction, contact your local County Extension Office.