

# Hiring Arborists, Tree Stump Grinding Services

## Hire Certified Arborists for Tree Pruning, Tree Care

By [David Beaulieu](#), About.com Guide



Large Stump Grinder for grinding stumps down to the roots

The consumer's need for hiring [arborists](#)<sup>1</sup> or tree services spans the whole spectrum from dire necessity to desirable choice. If you have a large tree limb hanging over your house, you may have little choice but to hire a tree service to remove it safely. At the other end of the spectrum, to raise or protect your property value, hiring pros to put their artistic flare and scientific knowledge to work in pruning your prized trees may make sense. Arborists must be thoroughly versed in the field of [arboriculture](#)<sup>2</sup> in order to become certified.

Or perhaps an old stump is consuming valuable space on your property. You can opt to have it removed through a process known as "stump grinding." A machine called a "stump grinder" is used for stump grinding. Elsewhere I provide do-it-yourself tips on [stump removal without resorting to stump grinding](#)<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, before hiring arborists or tree services, you must first clearly define what your specific needs are. Your selection criteria will vary according to those needs. For the sake of simplicity, let's break the potential consumer's needs down into four broad work categories:

- Grunt work
- Dangerous work
- Tree pruning work
- Tree care work

By **grunt work** I mean work that requires strenuous labor (or equipment by which strenuous labor is reduced) but minimal expertise. Brush chipping and stump grinding would be examples. For such utilitarian work, price will probably be the guiding factor in your choice of whom to hire. Note that stump grinding work is messy: you'll have wood chips all over your property afterwards. For a picture of the machine used in stump grinding, see the photo above.

**Dangerous work** includes removing diseased or partially broken limbs (a procedure called "limbing") that threaten to fall on a house, whether your own or your neighbor's. Of course, the removal of any tree or tree limb located near a house represents such a threat, whether or not the tree is healthy. Thus, removing a perfectly healthy tree for the sake of letting more sun into a house puts you at just as much risk as does removing a dead tree that looks like it's going to fall any moment now. With so much to lose should the operation go awry, in this case you would not want to go the bargain-basement route. Selecting a tree service that has a solid reputation and bona fide insurance is obviously of utmost importance here.

**Pruning trees** requires an artist's touch and a scientist's mind. Ask for local references, so that you can see examples of someone's pruning work before hiring. More so than for any of the other work categories, here "seeing is believing," and it is fairly easy to make a determination simply by looking at work done for references. It is best to hire a certified arborist for your tree pruning needs.

**Tree care** work pertains to all aspects of achieving the maximum health of your trees, including proper fertilization and pest/disease control. As with tree pruning work, here we are once again in the province of certified arborists. Talk to your prospects as if you were consulting with doctors: just as you expect a doctor to be knowledgeable about the human body and sensitive to its needs, so you should judge arborists by their knowledge of trees and

love for them. Be suspicious of anyone who suggests [topping](#)<sup>4</sup> a tree or is hasty in suggesting that a beloved tree cannot be saved and must be immediately removed.

Okay, now you've defined your tree care particular needs. But how do you find the certified arborist or reputable tree service that can fill those needs adequately? You will save yourself a lot of time, money and trouble in the long run by conducting a bit of research at this point. If you need tree pruning or tree care work done, consult the information below on the National Arborist Association, which pertains to hiring certified arborists. For tree service needs, such as limbing trees near a house, refer instead to [Hiring a Tree Service](#)<sup>1</sup>.

**Note: The National Arborist Association has recently changed its name to the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA).**

In shopping for a certified arborist, take full advantage of professional standards for arborists that have been instituted for the consumer's benefit. The NAA (National Arborist Association) preaches to its members the importance of voluntarily adhering to standards as a way for them to distinguish themselves from charlatans in the eyes of consumers. The standards derive from American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

Tree care ANSI standards fall into two categories. The ANSI A300 standard states accepted practices for pruning, cabling/bracing and fertilization. The ANSI Z133 pertains to safe work practices. The Web will be your best research tool here. Visit the [Tree Care Industry Association website](#)<sup>2</sup> and conduct a zip-code search for qualified members in your area. Another membership that adds credibility to an arborist's claims is the International Society of Arboriculture. Visit the [ISA Web site](#)<sup>3</sup> to learn how its members become certified.

The yellow pages will probably be less effective than the Web to search for certified arborists. The yellow pages for my area does not have a listing for "Arborists." Instead, there is only a heading for "Tree Service." The contents of the ads under this heading, however, do provide a helpful hint as to the particular expertise of the advertisers. Some ads place emphasis on "tree care," "fertilizing," "pest/disease control" and "fine pruning." In other ads "brush chipping," "lot clearing," "fire wood," "stump grinding," etc. are predominant. Although both types of ads fall under the heading "Tree Service," they seem indicative of two very different types of services.

If you need to have a tree pruned expertly, then you want to hire someone who is a wizard with pruning shears. For your needs, a chain saw wizard may not cut the mustard. Make sure you've made a well-informed decision before the cutting begins!

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