

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Why hire an arborist?

An arborist is a tree care specialist, knowledgeable about the needs of trees, and who is trained to provide proper care.

Hiring an arborist is an important decision to make.

Trees that are well cared for can be an asset to the homeowner and the local environment. They are aesthetically pleasing, improve air quality, provide a habitat for wildlife and can add value to a property.

A tree improperly cared for, can be aesthetically unattractive, and a potential liability.

The pruning or removing of trees can be dangerous work. For this reason it should only be carried out by a suitably qualified and insured person.

Services an arborist can provide

1) Pruning

An arborist can determine what type of pruning is required to maintain or improve the appearance or safety of a tree. These techniques include:

- Removing crossing or rubbing branches which can provide an entry site for infection
- Removing dead or weak limbs which pose a hazard
- Removing or reducing back limbs that interfere with telephone wires, roofs, gutters, windows; or that obstruct pavements or streets.
- Remove diseased or infected branches
- Improve the structure of the tree in order to lessen wind resistance and thus reduce the potential for storm damage



- Pruning to shape young trees
- Thinning or removing unnecessary branches

2) Removal

Tree removal is always seen as a last resort. There are circumstances when it is necessary and an arborist can help to determine when it is necessary.

Removal is recommended when:

- The tree is dead or dying
- The tree is considered hazardous and an unacceptable risk to people or property
- The tree is causing an obstruction which cannot be corrected through pruning
- The tree is crowding out or damaging other trees
- The tree is to be removed in order to be replaced by a more suitable species
- Construction makes the retention of the tree impossible.

3) Emergency Tree Care

Under certain extreme weather conditions such as high winds, heavy snow or rainfall, branches and sometimes whole trees can fail. When this happens they can pose a real hazard to people and property.

An arborist is trained to work on trees damaged by storms, and can carry out pruning or removal in a safe manner, while reducing any further risk of damage to property.

4) Planting

Some arborists can assist in the selection and planting of trees.

When deciding to plant a tree, the location and species are extremely important. The right tree in the right place can



enhance your property and save you money in the long term by avoiding unnecessary pruning or maintenance that can result due to improper species and site selection.

5) Other services

Many arborists can provide a selection of additional tree care services including:

- Providing comprehensive tree reports
- Practicing good plant health care. This preventative approach to maintenance helps the tree to better defend itself against pests, diseases and site problems.
- Soil aeration to help with root growth
- Spraying to help with certain pests and diseases.

How to select the right arborist for the job

There are various things to consider when selecting an arborist, which include:

- Membership of a professional organisation such as the Arboricultural Association, International Society of Arboriculture and the Royal Forestry Society
- Always ask for proof of insurance. A reputable arborist will have public liability insurance, and if acting as a consultant they should have professional indemnity insurance
- If you hire an arborist without insurance you could be held responsible for any damages or injuries that occur as a result of the job
- Ask for references to find out where the company has carried out similar work. If in doubt, check the references out
- Unless you know or are happy with the arborist, get more than one quote
- Be wary of individuals who go door to door offering tree work. Improper tree care can be expensive in the long run and can take years to correct

- Good arborists will only carry out work in line with industry best practice. Unnecessary practices such as topping, removing excess living tissue, disfiguring a tree or spiking a live tree should never be carried out.
- Don't always accept the lowest bid. You should examine the credentials and written quote from the company and then weigh up the best combination of price, work to be done, skill and professionalism of the company in order to protect your investment.

Get it in writing

When looking for an arborist to carry out work to your tree, ask for a written itemised quote.

Ask the arborist when the work will start and finish

Who will be responsible for the removal of debris?

Is the price quoted the final price?

If I want more work done, what will the hourly rate be?

Be an informed consumer

When selecting an arborist you need to ensure that they maintain the appropriate insurance. Currently this is Public Liability cover to a minimum of £5,000,000 in any one event, and Employer Liability Insurance with unlimited cover.

A consulting arborist who offers professional advice should maintain professional insurance to a minimum of £500,000 in any one occurrence.

If the arborist is reluctant to show proof of insurance cover, then do not hire him.

If you require any further information to help you decide how and where to hire an arborist, contact Northumberland County Council on 0845 600 6400 and ask to speak to your local Tree and Woodland Officer. Alternatively, you can contact the Arboriculture Association on (01242) 522152 or at www.trees.org.uk