

How to Choose a Tree Surgeon/Arborist

Tree Surgery is a highly specialised job which requires proven knowledge, skills and experience. Competent arborists (tree surgeons) will have certificates which show that they have been trained and assessed and they will use safety equipment to protect you, your property and themselves.

Insurance

You must ensure that they have public liability insurance cover. Reputable tree surgeons will be pleased to provide copies of their insurance, qualifications and professional memberships and will work to nationally recognised standards.

Standards

They should work to British Standard(BS) 3998:2010. This is particularly important if they are carrying out work to a protected tree. **Adherence to the British Standard is usually a condition of consented tree work and non-compliance could result in the prosecution of the tree surgeon or tree owner.** Anyone who doesn't quote BS3998:2010 is not working to current best practice

Competence

It is compulsory that tree surgeons have been assessed for their competence in carrying out the dangerous tasks they do. This is normally demonstrated by National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC) assessments which provide tree surgeons with certificates of competence for chainsaw use, using a chainsaw at height and climbing trees. A competent arborist will be able to show you their certificates or NPTC ID card.

Whilst certificates show that the tree surgeon has been assessed, experience is key to the work being carried out safely. Be wary of arborists who are not established in your area.

If you employ a tree surgeon that is not qualified and an accident occurs, you may be vicariously liable for not taking reasonable steps to ensure the work would be carried out safely.

Get Written Quotes

Always ask for a written quotation giving full and clear details of the work to be undertaken. We suggest you obtain more than one so you can compare the service provided. Initial visits may be free, but it's worth checking before you make an appointment.

Obtain and Check Local and Recent References.

Most tree good tree surgeons will be able to provide suitable references.

Check List

- Are you happy that the tree surgeon is competent and has proven knowledge, skill, experience and insurance?
- Have you obtained a written specification giving full and clear details of the work to be undertaken? Be careful when comparing quotes to ensure they are like for like.
- Is VAT included in the quotation?
- Who will check with the Local Planning Authority to find out whether the tree is protected either by a Tree Preservation Order or located in a Conservation Area. A tree surgeon may charge a fee for their time to fill out an application form; will this be deducted from the price of the job?
- What steps will they take to protect you and your property?
- Is traffic management required?
- What will happen to the debris?
- If logs are being kept by you what length will they be cut to?
- If a tree is to be felled, is stump grinding included or what height will the stump be left at?

Written Reports, Tree Surveys and Advice

If you require a written report on your tree or technical or legal advice on tree related matters you should consider using an arboricultural consultant. An arboricultural consultant can also provide you with a tree survey if you need one as part of a planning application.

A professional providing this type of service should hold Professional Indemnity Insurance and one of the following qualifications or industry recognised standards:

- Certificate in Arboriculture level 3/4 (Typically the AA Technicians Certificate or L4DipArb)
- Diploma in Arboriculture, Level 6 Diploma in Arboriculture (L6DipArb or ProfDipArb)
- FdSc, BSc or MSc (Foundation Degree, Degree or Masters) in arboriculture.
- Professional Member or Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters attained by an arboricultural route / Chartered Arboriculturist (MICFor / FICFor)
- Fellow of the Arboricultural Association, Arboricultural Association Registered Consultant

Check that the consultant has undertaken regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) since they have gained their qualification so you know their knowledge is current.