

HIRING AN ARBORIST AND ASSESSING TREES



The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is the main body who certifies arborists. Looking for an ISA Certified Arborist is a good place to start. If the arborist is conducting a tree risk assessment, then they should have a Tree Risk Assessment Qualification. Assessing and pruning trees is a combination of science and art, in order to improve structure, mitigate risk, and improve function.

FIND AN ARBORIST:

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) maintains a database of certified arborists:

<https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/findanarborist> and the Pacific Northwest chapter of the ISA also maintains a database: <https://pnwisa.org/>

Services may include pruning, removal, cabling, and pest management. They might also provide the services listed under consulting arborist below.

The American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) maintains a database of consulting arborists: <https://www.asca-consultants.org/search/custom.asp?id=3818>

Services may include tree risk assessment, appraisals, management plans, and permitting. These arborists are less likely to conduct pruning or tree removal.

Plant Amnesty maintains a database for arborist referrals in King County:

<https://www.plantamnesty.org/services/referral-services/>

THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING AN ARBORIST:

- Avoid arborists that leave door hangers
- Get multiple estimates, these are often free
- Ask for references
- Ask for qualifications (ISA) and insurance
- Ask what other options there are aside from tree removal
- Do your own research
- Make sure they do not use climbing spikes, except during removal
- Check to see if a permit is required, the arborist may not know
- The person who mows your lawn may not be a good option for tree pruning
- A good arborist will **NOT** recommend windsailing or topping your tree
- A good arborist **WILL** clearly explain the reasons for pruning
- Good pruning often looks like little has been done to the tree
- Good tree care can be expensive upfront but save money in the long-term
- Make sure to have a clear agreement and contract

MONITORING YOUR TREES – what to look for:

- Large portions of the tree turning brown all at once – usually not in the fall when many trees naturally shed leaves and needles
- Yellowing in leaves or smaller leaves than nearby trees

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- Mushrooms or conks on the tree or near the base
- Large pieces of deadwood or hanging branches – winter is a good time to look for hanging branches on deciduous trees
- Abnormal lean of the tree, usually with soil mounding at the base – NOTE: many trees have a phototropic lean, or grow towards the sun, which does not necessarily indicate an increased risk
- Large cracks, splits, or cavities
- When in doubt contact an arborist

RIGHT TREE FOR THE RIGHT PLACE:

Things to consider when planting trees

- Physical constraints
 - Overhead wires
 - Underground utilities – Call 8-1-1
 - Sight lines
 - Distance to buildings
- Environmental considerations
 - Irrigated or not?
 - Soil type
 - Amount of light
 - What other trees are doing well in the area?
- Tree considerations
 - Avoid noxious species that can outcompete our native plants
 - Avoid trees with aggressive roots near sidewalks and other infrastructure
 - Consider what you want in a tree (e.g., fruit, flowers, beautiful bark, fall foliage, shade, etc.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Tree ID and Selection:

- <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations> - website and application for identifying and mapping plants
- <https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/> - woody plant database with detailed descriptions and identification tips
- <https://green2.kingcounty.gov/gonative/Index.aspx> - native plant guide

Soil and Gardening:

- <https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/> - horticulture myths, dissecting common gardening tips
- <https://kingcd.org/programs/better-soils/healthy-soil/> - Get free soil testing to reduce fertilizer use and improve plant growth

Tree Protection:

- <http://www.jamesurban.net/specifications> - best management practices and diagrams for tree protection, planting, and irrigation
- <https://pnwisa.org/page/protecting-trees-from-damage> - Guidelines on tree protection during development