

DON'T GET TAKEN BY FLY-BY-NIGHT TREE CARE "PROFESSIONALS"

Maryland's licensed professional arborists take pride in their care of trees, and are skilled in pruning, pest and disease management, tree repair, removal, and in some cases, value appraisals. But some who claim to be arborist aren't professional. And this is just the time of year—and, hurricanes and wind storms are just the kinds of conditions—to bring the not-so-professional tree care "specialists," chainsaw in hand, knocking at the property owner's door.

"These so-called 'fly-by-nighters' want only to turn a quick buck. They have little regard for the high-risk situations that storms create for both themselves and homeowners," warns Peter Gerstenberger, director of education and safety for the National Arborist Association, based in Amherst, New Hampshire.

With hundreds and possibly thousands of your dollars at stake—not to mention the integrity and appearance of your property—you should make sure you take your time deciding who to hire and what really needs to be done, says Gerstenberger.

"Don't believe pitches that claim you can save money by simply 'getting the job done' then and there. And, of course, never pay in advance," Gerstenberger cautions.

To help you avoid making long-regretted monetary, safety and esthetic mistakes, refer to the following tips, issued by the National Arborist Association (NAA), on what to look for and ask when hiring an arborist (tree care practitioner):

- Ask if the arborist is a member of the Maryland Arborist Association, National Arborist Association, the International Society of Arboriculture, the American Forestry Association, American Society of Consulting Arborists or another relevant professional association or society. Membership is no guarantee of quality, but it does imply a professional, long-term interest on the part of the arborist.
- Ask if the potential service provider is an International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborist, or is a Maryland Licensed arborist. Again, this is no guarantee of quality, but it does suggest a professional attitude. Arborists nationwide can be certified through the ISA. The Maryland Arborist Association and the National Arborist Association offer their members the opportunity to improve their workforce through continuing education programs.
- Your arborist should be able to provide upon request current certificates of insurance covering liability for damage to people and property during work, as well as for workers' compensation insurance. Be certain that the coverage is current.
- Local references are an excellent guide to an arborist's abilities and professionalism. Ask for references and try to contact those given.
- Get a second opinion for any major work you plan to have done. It's worth the expense to get a second or third estimate.
- Pointers that your arborist is more interested in your wallet than your satisfaction include: Using climbing spikes on live trees; immediate desire to remove a viable and living tree (which is always a last resort); and lack of proper, well-maintained equipment, or knowledge of safety procedures.

The National Arborist Association is the trade group for owners and operators of tree care companies nationwide.

To find the NAA-member arborist closest to you, call 1-800-733-2622, or visit the NAA's home page: <http://www.natlarb.com> , where you will be prompted to a search by zip code.