

Cleaning Up After a Hurricane: Get the Right Tree Care Professional¹

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Be Safe: Hire a Tree Expert

Tree Care Professional

Proper tree care is best done by people with appropriate skills for the tree work at hand. Tree care professionals have advanced training and abilities to properly and safely correct damage or remove a tree as needed (Figure 1). Professionals with adequate equipment and insurance can handle these situations:



Figure 1. Certified arborist working in a tree.

Credit: UF/IFAS Communications

- Taking trees down in open areas
- Removing dead or damaged and hazardous limbs

- Providing recommendations for tree planting

Certified Arborist

The care of trees is an advanced field in which professionals have training and credentials. Situations that require advanced training are best conducted by ISA certified arborists (Figure 2). These qualified professionals will assess the situation and make recommendations that may include:



Figure 2. Tree removal, especially in locations with no room to safely fell a tree, is skill-based and a situation that requires professional help.

Credit: Adobe Stock, photogrfx, Educational License

- Removing an unsafe tree or broken limb that is near a potential target such as people and property
- Reaching limbs that require climbing or an aerial lift
- Restoring a damaged tree that could be saved
- Pruning to promote good structure

Hiring an Arborist

Hiring an arborist is a worthwhile investment. Trees increase property value when they are well maintained but can be a liability if poorly pruned or unhealthy. Be careful when selecting a person to help clean up after the storm. Ask for proof of insurance, if the person is a certified arborist, if industry standards are used, and the work cost and timeframe. While there are local tree care companies, qualified arborists from around the country also come to

help following natural disasters. Learn to identify qualified arborists because unqualified workers may get hurt, cause irreparable damage to trees, or may take advantage of the situation.

Use These Questions to Help You Find a Qualified Arborist

INSURANCE

1. Are you insured for property damage, personal liability, and worker's compensation?

An unfortunate fact: if you hire an uninsured company or person, you may be held responsible for medical bills and lost wages for the injured worker.

CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

2. Are you certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)?

Being certified requires professional experience and knowledge of the best techniques in the industry. Arborists attend training courses and continuing education classes to learn the latest research and best practices.

3. What are the ANSI Z133 and ANSI A300 guidelines?

Professionals use the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards, which all tree care professionals should be familiar with using. ANSI Z133 represents safety standards for tree care operations in the United States. ANSI A300 represents the best management practices in the industry for pruning and other tree care operations.

ESTIMATES

4. What are the procedures involved, equipment used, price, and time frame?

Get more than one written estimate. Keep in mind that specialized equipment, qualified skills, and insurance will cost more. Good tree work is worth the additional investment; poor work may cost more in the long run.

Homeowner: Stay Safe!

Homeowners lacking proper skills can be seriously injured trying to do their own tree work. It is always a good idea to consult a professional before undertaking any major restoration or removal. Professional tree workers are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE): hard hat, gloves, eye protection, face shield, chainsaw chaps, and appropriate footwear (Figure 3). If you decide to do some of the cleanup yourself, remember to follow these guidelines:



Figure 3. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an important component of safe tree removal. Credit: Adobe Stock, Labels: Alyssa Vinson

- Do not use a chain saw if you are not experienced in operating it or physically unable to safely do so.
- If you *must* use a chain saw, work only on the ground.
- Never do any tree work that involves felling trees, climbing of any kind, or using ropes. Get a professional to help you with these situations.

Electrical Hazards

Trees can uproot underground utilities and tear down power lines during hurricanes. The combination of electrical wires and flooding creates a hazardous environment that requires extreme caution (Figure 4). Remember:



Figure 4. Only qualified line-clearance arborists can work on trees near power lines such as with this aerial lift.

Credit: Adobe Stock, knelson20

- Only qualified line-clearance arborists are allowed to work near electrical lines.
- Call the power company to report tree limbs that have fallen on a power line.
- Assume all power lines are energized and do not touch. Improper use of generators may energize lines without warning.
- Beware! Electrocution may occur if any part of your body touches a conductor (water, tool, tree branch, fence, etc.) in contact with an energized power line.

To Find a Certified Arborist in Your Area, Contact:

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
<https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist>

Florida Chapter ISA <https://www.floridaisa.org/>

UF/IFAS Extension Offices <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/>

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