

Tree Issue? Why You Should Hire a Registered Consulting Arborist

When I tell people I'm a consulting arborist they often ask what is that? Everyone is familiar with tree care companies, but not so much what the role of a consulting arborist. The common conception is when there is a tree problem, call up a tree contractor and have them do the work.

Consulting arborists are the pre-eminent authorities for tree related issues. Whether a homeowner, commercial consultant or legal professional, consulting arborists work toward ensuring the safety, health and preservation of trees in urban and rural settings. Trees in urban settings present many challenges. The public safety is always a primary concern. We rely upon proper tree installation and vigilant maintenance to ensure trees grow, thrive and remain safe.

When trees cause problems resulting in damage to infrastructure or creating a public safety hazard, an impartial source of advice and knowledge is needed to mediate the conflict. The role of a consulting arborist is to provide a comprehensive, objective and impartial viewpoint for all involved parties to make informed decisions.

The two-arboriculture industry associations responsible for the testing and administration for arborist certification are the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA). The ISA administers the testing to become a certified arborist. The ASCA focuses solely on the training, testing and administration of the Registered Consulting Arborist (RCA) program.

While certified arborists primarily work for tree care companies, urban forestry, or government agencies, registered consulting arborists are tree experts who consult on the most challenging tree issues. Earning the coveted RCA designation is a demanding process that requires the utmost commitment from an applicant. To become an RCA, one must first enroll and pass the ASCA Consulting Academy training. Academy emphasis is on technical writing and report preparation.

Following graduation, applicants must produce two additional written reports that pass the rigorous review by third party technical writing consultants. Arborists who graduate the academy are trained to deliver stronger work products for their clients. Their knowledge, experience and objective role as an RCA make them highly desirable for two groups of clients:

- Legal and Construction industry professionals requiring:
 - Expert witness and litigation support
 - Deposition and trial testimony
 - Various tree and plant related reports
 - Forensic evaluation of tree issues
 - Tree preservation and best management practices
 - Tree risk and health assessment
 - Tree appraisal and valuation

- Property owner, including homeowners, commercial, recreational and governmental owners, developers, homebuilders and homeowner associations requiring:
 - Assessment of tree risk and potential hazards
 - Tree care, tree protection and best management practices
 - Field monitoring
 - Tree and plant appraisal
 - Tree and plant material selection and inspection

When hiring a tree consultant for legal or professional services, look for the “RCA” after the consultant’s name. You can rest assured that individual is devoted to a lifelong learning about arboriculture and devoted to providing comprehensive, impartial, consulting services.