

Florida storms often bring out the best in a community. Friend, family, neighbors and even sometimes strangers help each other out in the clean up efforts of property and tree damage left in the wake of a storm, tornado or hurricane.

Unfortunately storms can also bring out the worst too. After a storm (or even a regular day), the fast buck artists go to work looking to profit from the misfortune of a situation. Often they prey on the elderly and widows. These artists go door to door looking to clean up and clean out more than just trees! So how can property and homeowners protect themselves.

- If you need the service of a professional tree care service; make sure you hire a licensed and insured arborist. With hundreds or even thousands of dollars at stake, not to mention the integrity and appearance of your property, trees and your personal safety, ask to see a current certificate and liability insurance.
- A reputable company will be listed in the phone book or on the internet or maybe a friend or family member can recommend a professional arborist with these credentials. A disreputable individual or company often cruise neighborhoods going door to door and are known for ripping gutters off, breaking fences and bird baths and even dropping limbs or trees on houses or other structures. Then they typically fold up and leave, never to be seen again.
- Disreputable individuals or companies tend to solicit door to door, demand payment (all or part) in advance, or may offer tree topping (a practice that is very bad for the health of the tree). These individuals sell jobs without producing a written estimate or work order.
- Always insist on a signed contract as to costs, dates when work is to be performed, and exactly what is to be done.
- Insist climbing spikes not to be used unless the tree is being removed. The holes left behind from spiked tress are an open invitation for fungal diseases and insects.
- Always get a second opinion before removing any trees. If tree removal is unavoidable, I highly recommend tree replacement for property, neighborhood beautification and for wild life habitat.
- A properly pruned or trimmed tree is a bigger asset to you and your property than a removed healthy tree just for the profit of others.
- Never pay in advance.
- Don't be lured by a bargain price, if it seems too good to be true, it usually is.
- Don't just hire someone with a chainsaw who knocks on your door. Always hire a professional to protect yourself and your trees.
- Have your trees trimmed annually or biannually to help assure strong and healthy trees and remember the best time to plant a tree was yesterday.

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