

Homeowners should employ licensed horticulture professionals

Each spring and summer in Louisiana so-called yard specialists claiming to be arborists, landscape horticulturists and landscape irrigation contractors begin making the rounds in local neighborhoods with bargain basement offers for yard work. Many have little or no training. Often their handiwork can produce less than desirable outcomes and downright disasters.

“It takes training and expertise to drop a tree near a residence with minimal effect on the owner’s home, yard or landscaping,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Mike Strain, D.V.M.

Strain said the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry’s (LDAF) Horticulture and Quarantine Programs Division oversees the licensing of landscape horticulturists, arborists and landscape irrigation contractors.

“All arborists, landscape horticulturists and landscape irrigation contractors must be licensed by the LDAF,” Strain said.

Strain advised that homeowners ask to see a license issued by LDAF before allowing any work to be done on their property. Homeowners should also ask arborists, landscape horticulturists and landscape irrigation contractors for references before engaging their services and should follow up by checking those references.

“These are basic steps every homeowner should take to be sure that they are hiring a licensed professional,” Strain said.

Strain said licensed professionals are tested by the LDAF to ensure that they have the professional training necessary to do the work. Arborists and landscape irrigation contractors are required to attend continuing education training to renew their licenses.

In addition, licensed horticultural professionals are required to display their LDAF license number on their vehicle.

“Every year fly-by-night operators prey on unsuspecting homeowners who are looking for a quick and inexpensive fix for their dead and damaged trees and help in their landscapes,” Strain said. “Call our Horticulture and Quarantine Programs Division at 225-952-8100 if you

have any questions about whether a landscape horticulturist, landscape irrigation contractor or arborist is properly licensed.”

Strain said consumers may also check the LDAF website at www.LDAF.la.gov for a list of licensed horticulture professionals. The link to the list may be accessed in the “I Want To” box in the right hand column of LDAF’s homepage under “Find a Licensed Horticulture Professional.”

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For more information, contact Sam Irwin or Laura Pursnell-Lindsay at 225-922-1280 or presssecretary@ldaf.la.gov.