



Credentials are Important

TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN

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One would not go to a doctor or dentist who is not professionally certified. And who wants to fly in a commercial plane with a pilot who is not certified? In this modern age of increasing complexity, proof is necessary when we put our trust in the hands of those who we expect to be competent. It is now time to include the various practitioners of urban forestry in this category of professionalism.

With no pun intended, it can be said that urban forestry is a growing field. Not only do we plant and grow trees in our increasingly urbanized nation, we are also charged with keeping vegetation healthy and safe. In fact, the burdens of responsibility placed on every employee and volunteer associated with urban forestry are growing every year as society becomes more safety-conscious and — when things go wrong — litigious.

Certification and accreditation programs are one way to help prevent problems. The words stem from the Latin

Certification is now available at virtually every level and in most subfields of urban forestry and tree care. Better service to the public is one of the many reasons to find out which one is right for you and which should be required in your community.

certificare and generally mean to attest authoritatively or to confirm that something is true or as represented. Sometimes the two words are used interchangeably, but it is more accurate to use “certification” when referring to individuals, or sometimes to a specific product, and “accreditation” when applying the concept to organizations such as schools, businesses, or a department.

In this bulletin, some of the major opportunities available to individuals and communities are outlined. These are opportunities to improve, raise the bar of professionalism at all levels, and provide residents with assurance that their trees, waterways, and public lands are in good hands. That is, that they are taken seriously and managed professionally.



Arbor Day Foundation®
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How Credentials Serve Employees and the Community

Credentials offer one of those opportunities that fall into the category of a win-win. They upgrade worker skills, pride, and chances of employment while at the same time making conscientious companies more marketable and good city agencies even better.

IMPORTANT REASONS FOR CREDENTIALS

The following have been adopted from reasons cited by the International Society of Arboriculture and the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

It can be said that certification ...

- Establishes standards for professional knowledge, skills, and practice.
- Advances the profession.
- Builds an individual's self-image, pride, and sense of accomplishment. It also affirms to peers that he or she has a thorough knowledge and dedication to the field.
- Provides an incentive to continue personal development and serves as evidence of an individual's commitment to the practice and to lifelong learning.
- Protects the public and helps clients and employers select professionals who have met standards of knowledge or skills in the practice.
- Often provides the holder with a competitive advantage over uncertified individuals and may lead to increased income and professional opportunities.
- Is required by some governmental regulators or in requests for bids.

Similarly, accreditation of organizations, companies, and departments provides many of the same benefits.



Tim Kastning, owner of Grace Tree Service, a TCIA-accredited company in Rathdrum, Idaho, knows the importance of industry credentials. He has passed the exams and demonstrated the necessary experience to qualify for Board Certified Master Arborist. This recognition reflects the company's goals of providing sound and informed arboricultural services based on the latest scientific and technical knowledge.



Certification — Upgrading the Individual

Certification is proof provided by a recognized, authoritative organization that an individual has met specific requirements and demonstrated skill and knowledge by passing an exam.



ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST® The credential for anyone who works with trees



Being distinguished as an ISA Certified Arborist is widely recognized as fundamental to demonstrating proficiency in tree care. As such, this is a credential worth pursuing not only by professional arborists, but by anyone who works with community trees. In fact, many tree board members and volunteer organizers find this to be a useful way to increase their personal capacity and that of their organization.

The ISA Arborist Certification program is accredited by the American National Standards Institute under the ISO 17024 standard.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Three or more years of full-time, eligible, practical work experience in arboriculture and/or a degree in the field of arboriculture, urban forestry, or a related field from a regionally accredited educational institute.
2. Adherence to the Certified Arborist® Code of Ethics.
3. Successful completion of an exam consisting of the following 10 areas of knowledge. (Applicants usually prepare for the exam by studying a manual and/or taking a preparatory workshop.)
 - Soil Management
 - Tree Identification & Selection
 - Installation & Establishment
 - Safe Work Practices
 - Tree Biology
 - Pruning
 - Diagnosis and Treatment
 - Urban Forestry
 - Tree Protection
 - Tree Risk Management

To maintain certification, certified arborists must receive 30 continuing education units within three years. CEUs can be earned through attendance at approved conferences and courses or through other education-based opportunities that keep professionals current in their field.

OTHER ISA CERTIFICATIONS

Each of the following has its own set of requirements and is designed for workers in all subfields of arboriculture:

- ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist™
- ISA Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist®
- ISA Certified Tree Worker Climber Specialist®
- ISA Certified Tree Worker Aerial Lift Specialist®
- ISA Board Certified Master Arborist®

NOTE: Some communities have created their own certification requirements for commercial operators.

TREE RISK ASSESSMENT QUALIFICATION (TRAQ)

With the increased emphasis in recent years on maintaining the condition of community trees to be acceptably safe, the evaluation of condition and the broader assessment of risk have gained unprecedented importance. To qualify certified arborists and other professionals holding credentials to conduct risk assessments, a special two-day course has been designed by ISA and is offered throughout the country. Successful completion of the workshop provides a special credential called TRAQ Qualification. The course includes:

- ✓ Levels of Assessment
- ✓ Target Assessment
- ✓ Site Assessment
- ✓ Tree Biology & Mechanics
- ✓ Tree Inspection & Assessment
- ✓ Data Analysis & Risk Categorization
- ✓ Mitigation
- ✓ Reporting

Certification (continued)

CERTIFIED TREECARE SAFETY PROFESSIONAL (CTSP)

This certification is awarded by the Tree Care Industry Association. It is an ambitious attempt to make work in the industry safer for those who climb, cut, or clear around trees. Noted arborist John Ball says, "Safety is not a component of this certification; it is the certification."

According to the association's website, "Despite many commendable efforts and individual successes with safety over time, accidents continue to increase in the tree-care industry. This hurts our ability to recruit and retain employees, reduces consumer confidence in our abilities, and shrinks our profits when accidents and injuries raise our costs of doing business." Certification through this program is intended to bring about change by developing and nurturing a culture of safety. In fact, once an employee receives this certification, he or she is expected to serve as a safety coach.

REQUIREMENTS

1. At least one of the following:
 - a. Three years of technical field experience in tree care with at least one year of assumed responsibility for safety (crew leader, safety committee member, emergency responder, etc.).
 - b. Six months of technical field experience in arboriculture and one year in a professional safety position.
 - c. Two- or four-year degree in arboriculture, forestry, ornamental/environmental horticulture, natural resources, industrial hygiene, occupational safety, or other related field with an internship that provided technical field experience.
2. Completion of the CTSP Study Guide, which includes critical thinking exercises.
3. Attendance at an advanced safety/behavioral workshop and successful completion of an exam at the conclusion of the workshop.

Candidates for this certification should also possess the inherent skills that will help them be effective coaches and help protect fellow workers, improve morale, and increase production. These include:

- Good communication skills
- Strong instructional skills
- Model behavior

To maintain this credential, 30 continuing education credits must be earned in a three-year period. These can be earned by attending professional development programs, teaching others in safety, and developing new safety elements in the company — with some CEUs required in each of these areas.

OTHER TCIA CREDENTIALING PROGRAMS

Courses leading to credentials in the following areas are available and are part of the association's Tree Care Academy®, which can be taught at local locations.

- Aerial Lift Specialist
- Aerial Rescue Training Program
- Chain Saw Specialist
- Chipper Operator Specialist
- Crew Leader
- Ground Operations Specialist
- Plant Health Care Technician
- Single Rope Climber Specialist
- Tree Care Apprentice
- Tree Care Specialist
- Tree Climber Specialist
- Tree Care Safety Specialist

A survey of 300 companies found that accredited companies with a Certified Tree Care Safety Specialist reported half as many recordable accidents as others.



Certifications in the Landscape Industry

Closely related to traditional urban forestry and arboriculture is the landscape industry. Many state nursery and landscape associations sponsor statewide certifications, and the National Association of Landscape Professionals authorizes several. Some, such as certified lawn care or interior plantscapes, may be a bit outside the interest area of most Bulletin readers, but several are pertinent to urban forestry. These are listed below with features of the exams required for certification.

LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY CERTIFIED MANAGER This is intended for landscape contractors, business owners, or managers.

- Corporate Finance
- Exterior and Interior Production/Operation & Horticulture
- Human Resources
- Leadership & Corporate Citizenship
- Marketing & Sales Management
- Risk, Law & Contracts
- Strategic Planning

LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY CERTIFIED TECHNICIAN — EXTERIOR
Appropriate for those who want to demonstrate their basic knowledge in various landscape practices. The exam for this certification is administered by participating state or regional nursery and landscape associations. In addition to a written exam, the main portion of the testing is hands-on in one of the following areas selected by the applicant:

- Softscape Installation
- Hardscape Installation
- Turf Maintenance
- Ornamental Maintenance
- Irrigation

LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY CERTIFIED HORTICULTURAL TECHNICIAN
This is designed for green industry professionals who want to expand or reinforce their knowledge of landscape plant life. Components of the exam include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Plant Physiology | • Fertilizers |
| • Plant Identification | • Measuring Property |
| • Soils | • Fertilizer Placement |
| • Plant Establishment | • Calibration of Fertilizer Delivery |
| • Plant Health Care Management | • Chemical Injury |
| • Woody Ornamental Diseases | • Diagnostic Methods |
| • Insects and Pests | • Pesticide Delivery Methods |
| • Physiological Problems | • Safety in Tree and Shrub Spraying |

HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION

See page 8 for information about quick links to any of these certification programs.

Breadth in urban forestry includes knowledge of landscape practices. Several certifications are available in these areas to help demonstrate proficiency.



Accreditation — Higher Standards for Organizations & Agencies

Accreditation is a stamp of approval for an organization or agency. It is awarded for meeting standards set by a third party organization that is accepted as representing the pertinent profession. For example, the Society of American Foresters is the accreditation body for qualified forestry schools, including in recent years, urban forestry programs. Here are some other accreditations that may help raise the bar in your community.

MUNICIPAL FORESTRY ACCREDITATION

Accreditation by the Society of Municipal Arborists brands a community with the highest distinction of professionalism in the management of its urban forest. This accreditation was developed through a peer-reviewed process and builds on the Arbor Day Foundation's successful Tree City USA program by incorporating additional professional standards deemed important for managing municipal trees.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Has at least one ISA Certified Arborist on staff, preferably an ISA Certified Municipal Specialist.
2. Has a forest management plan that includes items specified by SMA and is approved by the appropriate local body.
3. Has been awarded Tree City USA recognition currently.
4. Has received the Tree City USA Growth Award at least once in the past five years.
5. Shows preference to TCIA accredited tree-care companies when private arborists are contracted.
6. Incorporates ANSI Z133.1 safety standards and ANSI A300 tree-care performance standards.
7. Adheres to the SMA Code of Ethics and promotion of SMA objectives.

NOTE: This is an international accreditation program. Modifications in the requirements are made for communities outside the United States.



Having an accredited forestry department helps assure residents and the business community that the best practices in urban forestry are being followed. This designation can be a source of pride that contributes to community spirit and high employee morale.

The Village of Glencoe, Illinois, considers itself fortunate to join the prestigious group of communities accredited by the Society of Municipal Arborists. SMA accreditation is the highest honor a municipal forestry department can attain ... it (also) gives our staff that pat on the back that we don't always get often enough from our clients.

— John Houde VILLAGE ARBORIST

TREE CARE INDUSTRY ACCREDITATION



This accreditation is awarded to commercial tree-care companies by the Tree Care Industry Association. It is a mark of distinction available to companies of all sizes that meet the highest standards of professionalism.

To become accredited, a company must meet a 63-point checklist and pass an on-site inspection conducted by an independent auditor. The checklist and inspection verify that accredited companies:

- Have a minimum number of Certified Arborists and Treecare Safety Professionals on staff.
- Have documented safety and training programs.
- Meet industry standards ANSI A300 and Z133 for tree-care management and safety.
- Follow customer satisfaction best practices.
- Have appropriate business and worker's compensation insurance.

MAINTENANCE & RENEWALS The company maintains accreditation with periodic checkups.

- **EVERY MONTH** Business and worker's compensation insurance is checked.
- **EVERY YEAR** The number of Certified Arborists and Certified Treecare Safety Professionals on staff is verified. Safety and consumer satisfaction records are reviewed.
- **EVERY THREE YEARS** On-site inspections are conducted to re-accredit the company.

TCIA also offers Utility Contractor Accreditation for commercial vegetation management and utility line clearance contractors.

OTHER ACCREDITATION AND RELATED PROGRAMS

PARK AND RECREATION ACCREDITATION Park and recreation departments in many communities can have an important bearing on the quality of the urban forest. In fact, in some cities, personnel in this department have the responsibility for the care of all public trees. Accreditation of these departments is the responsibility of the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), an affiliate of the National Recreation & Park Association. Accreditation is based on a lengthy list of standards, most of them only peripherally related to urban forestry. There is also an onsite visit by a team of experts. Pertinent sections of the requirements for accreditation include:

- Environmental Sustainability Policies
- Facility and Land Use Management
- Natural Resource Management Planning

STAR COMMUNITIES STAR stands for Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating communities. STAR Communities is a nonprofit organization that uses an evaluation method in an attempt to make communities more sustainable while raising the quality of life for residents. The evaluation is based on the organization's definition of a sustainable community and includes the common elements of having a healthy environment, building a strong economy, and being concerned with the well-being of its residents. The result of the process is called certification rather than accreditation, and, depending on the outcome of a review, a community is ranked from the lowest level, Reporting, to 3-, 4-, or 5-STAR recognition.

Accredited park and recreation departments, such as the District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation, are held to the highest standards of operation and care of grounds and facilities.



Certified Nature Explore Classrooms

Nature Explore Classrooms are being created in private and public spaces throughout the nation. These research-based outdoor classrooms are designed to introduce young children to nature and provide positive experiences playing in the outdoors with plants and natural materials. Certification of the classroom means that standards developed by the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation have been followed. Requirements for certification include:

- Designing the space following specified principles that are based on early childhood research.
- Staff development through attendance at a Nature Explore Workshop.
- Family involvement is encouraged regularly.

Certification provides access to a special website for news, networking, and continuing education in addition to assuring high-quality planning, construction, and use of the classroom. A free Resource Guide provides more information and guidance.

A Certified Nature Explore Classroom assures that standards have been met that provide the greatest benefits for the children in a community.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

Quick links to the websites of all organizations mentioned in this bulletin can be found by visiting arborday.org/bulletins.

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