

Arborist

Climb, prune and take down trees for a living. You can start the week after high school and learn on a rope.

TYPICAL PAY

\$50,960

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$38k to \$80k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Tree care companies, power line crews, city parks, golf courses

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
A diploma is all most tree companies ask for. Get a driver's license while you are at it.
- 2 Get hired as a ground worker** Start right away
Dragging brush, feeding the chipper, rigging knots, learning how a tree comes apart safely.
- 3 Learn to climb** 6 months to 2 years
Rope and saddle work under a senior climber, then chainsaw work off the ground. Some companies send you to a climbing school.
- 4 Earn the Certified Arborist credential** About year 3
The International Society of Arboriculture asks for about three years of full-time tree care experience, less if you hold a degree in arboriculture or forestry, then a written exam.
- 5 Specialize or lead** Year 4 and up
Take a crew, move into power line clearance, add tree risk assessment work, or start your own company.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from your first week, no debt
- + Outdoors, physical, never the same tree twice
- + Easy to start your own company
- One of the most dangerous jobs in the country
- Heat, cold, poison ivy, wasps, rain
- Slow winters in colder states unless you do storm work

Good to know

It is one of the most dangerous trades

Falls, chainsaw cuts and contact with power lines make tree care one of the highest injury and death rates of any job in the United States. The Tree Care Industry Association runs an entire safety institute just...

The tallest tree on earth is in California

A coast redwood nicknamed Hyperion, in Redwood National Park, stands about 380 feet tall. Climbers with rope and tape measured it. The park keeps its exact location quiet to protect it.

Optional boosts

Certified Arborist. Certified Tree Climber. Certified Arborist Utility Specialist. Board Certified Master Arborist.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Tree Trimmers and Pruners (37-3013.00)
International Society of Arboriculture: types of credentials
Tree Care Industry Association
Apprenticeship.gov, United States Department of Labor

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/arborist>



Scan for the full clicker