

Beware Of Tree Companies Hoping Scare You Into Removing Trees

This is a helpful reminder to all Menlo Oaks residents to be a wise and watchful consumer. Recently we've heard of several tree companies and their arborists canvassing our neighborhood in an attempt to alarm homeowners of potential risks their larger trees might pose. This has included urging people to cut down their Heritage Oaks, Redwoods and other older trees.

After scaring them, these companies have their arborist look at the trees, issue a report saying the trees should be removed, and finally they sell them costly tree removal services that may be unnecessary. They particularly target older home owners, and they give a bad name to good tree companies and arborists. See our list of reputable ones on the Menlo Oaks Tree Advocacy (MOTA) site at www.menlooaks-mota.org/

These services can cost \$5000-\$10,000—just to remove a single tree, and in some cases removing a tree is ill-advised when pruning it, reducing the canopy or having an arborist feed it will take care of problems. Unfortunately, by the time you realize the tree was actually healthy on the inside, it's too late because your "poorly formed", "sick" or "at risk" tree is gone (all terms arborists use to support their opinions). It's too late, and it will take hundreds of years to replace the tree you loved.

Before you let any arborist tell you to remove a tree completely—or perform extensive and expensive pruning, explore some of these options:

- Get a second opinion or a third—from an arborist, not the fellow who just happens to be in the neighborhood and knocked on your door. Check our list of arborists on the MOTA site.
- Find out what the arborist recommends to revitalize or make the tree healthier.
- Find out how many years the arborist thinks the tree can survive with good care.
- If the tree or branch is near a high voltage (upper) power line, check with PG&E to see if it considers the tree or a branch as a danger. If it does, PG&E will handle the issue for **free**.
- An estimate to cut down a tree should be free. You should only pay if you receive a full **arborist report** in writing, not a skimpy report. The evaluation should include things such as a description of the tree including location, measurements, tree type and approximate age, a detailed explanation of the areas needing attention, a rating scale for the overall health of the tree, and options for revitalizing or saving the tree.
- Get a least one **second opinion** from another qualified, licensed arborist.
- Always ask what can be done to rehabilitate the tree and save it if the initial proposal was to cut it down.
- Remember that if this is a Significant Tree or a Heritage Tree, pruning or tree removal by a homeowner requires a permit from San Mateo County - along with an arborist report and payment of a fee. There is a public posting, and notification

is sent to nearby neighbors. Those who object to removing the tree can appeal it and also pay a fee to do so.

Remember, the trees in Menlo Oaks come in all sorts of fantastic and irregular shapes -- **shape is NOT an indicator of health**. Neither are holes and cavities or areas where the bark is irregular, but has probably healed itself. Old oaks frequently have holes, but that doesn't mean they are dangerous or dying.

Pruning, reducing the canopy, balancing the branches of a tree, cabling and applying treatments to its roots or injecting it with healthy vitamins can keep it alive for the enjoyment and benefit of all for many years.