

The ISA Certification Credentials: The Right Certification for the Right Job

The International Society of Arboriculture has been working hard with our members to raise the standard of professional tree care. The decision to choose the right arborist is very important. Trees are a lifelong investment and you want to protect that investment.

The decision was once a simple one. Choose an ISA Certified Arborist. Now, the ISA has been listening to our credential holders and have responded by developing a career path in arboriculture through our certification programs. Not only does this benefit the professional, it will benefit you when hiring professional tree care.

The ISA Certification credentials can be viewed as a pyramid with the largest group at the base. These credentials were developed based on the knowledge required to obtain each one.

ISA Certified Tree Worker/Climber Specialists – These credential holders have a minimum of 18 months experience professionally climbing trees in a safe and efficient manner to perform tree care. They have knowledge in the major aspects involved in tree care including, pruning, removal, cabling and safety. They must pass a knowledge exam and a skills exam conducted by trained evaluators.

ISA Certified Arborist – This is the largest group of credential holders. These professional arborists have a minimum of three years experience in some aspect of tree care and have passed an exam developed by an international panel of experts. The exam extensively covers every aspect of tree care and the individuals must have an acceptable level of knowledge in all areas of arboriculture.

ISA Certified Arborist/ Utility Specialist or Municipal Specialist – These two certifications are for professional arborists who are ISA Certified Arborists in good standing but have additional experience in the specialty areas of tree care around power lines or tree care in urban areas. The utility specialists work for utility companies, their contractors or consultants. The municipal specialists work for cities and states, parks, contractors or consultants.

ISA Board Certified Master Arborist - This credential holder must be an ISA Certified Arborist and may have one or more of the other credential listed above. They must have a minimum of 7 years experience as an ISA Certified Arborist or its equivalent. They must pass a computer based exam that intensively covers all aspects of arboriculture. These individuals have advanced levels of knowledge in all aspects of tree care that may or may not be necessary for your needs. This is our smallest group of credential holders.

All of these levels must maintain their credential through continuing education. If you would like to learn more about any or all of these just click on the title.