



Have Trees Inspected Prior to Home Sale

A lot of homeowners select a property because of the mature trees on the lot. Trees can enhance a property, cool a home and are the ultimate eco treasure.

The home buying experience is stressful enough without getting zapped with unexpected expenses. As a certified arborist I have analyzed trees for homeowners, insurance and real estate agents. I have been doing this in the Chicagoland area for over 15 years.

Many new homeowners have called me to look at their trees *after the ink is dry on a contract*. That is when I have had to inform them that their trees are diseased, hazardous or require lots of pruning. Not only can this result in them having to spend thousands of dollars they weren't expecting to, but sometimes the trees have to be removed completely.

Prospective home buyers are used to having various parts of a home or property inspected. But they should have the trees inspected, too, by a certified arborist. If there is work to be done they can use this as a bargaining point. If they are intent on a property with mature trees – it's best to have them analyzed before closing the deal to make sure those trees are healthy and viable. Likewise, sellers (individuals and builders) can utilize a tree inspection as a selling point that increases the property's value.

I realize the buying/selling process is already involved but I think this is an important point; more so for older homes/properties but even new subdivisions have trees that are stressed or planted improperly.

After coming up with this concept which I call *Pre-Sale Arboricultural Inspection™* I reached out through the internet and a networking site called **LinkedIn** (I highly recommend joining this to anyone in business). I put a question out asking for feedback from anyone but specifically people in real estate. I got a lot of responses. While they are not all in the Chicagoland area I still think they are valid. It also demonstrates how this is not only a service I feel is beneficial but is something that many professionals think is a good idea:

A realtor in North Carolina wrote:

“Thank you for bringing this up. It is a very valid point and, since many people decide on a property because of the value in the mature landscape, they would be well advised to have a certified arborist to evaluate any potential issues.”

James Penman says:

“I fully agree.... In order to protect the house I bought 2 years ago, I've spent \$2K to bring down many diseased and damaged trees. Had the trees been included in the pre-purchase inspection, the previous owners would have been responsible.”

James echoes one of the main reasons for having the trees inspected prior to a home sale. Just like if there is a leaky basement or other problems with the house, the seller should be required to disclose this to the prospective buyer. Since the seller probably is not aware of potential trees problems, the buyer should have an expert look at them.

Please keep in mind that money spent on maintaining the health and beauty of your trees is not a frivolous expenditure but an investment. Statistics show that your landscape is up to 20% of the value of your property. When you spend money on your trees you can feel good about it

because you are investing in your property, which for most people is the biggest investment they are going to make in their lifetime. Healthy, better looking trees are worth more. You can also feel good because you are helping the environment; not only the environment around your home but your community and the world.

Colleen Rock, an executive real estate consultant with ReMax in the Cleveland/Akron area wrote:

“Chris, I could not agree with you more. A few years ago, a young couple who had just purchased a home in one of our most sought-after communities, was sitting at a picnic table in the backyard. Suddenly, a large limb fell from the tree overhead and killed the husband. Never, in a million years could anyone foresee such a tragedy. That is, unless you're a tree expert.”

While I'm not sure that even a certified arborist could have predicted what happened in this case, an expert could have pointed out deadwood and weak connections that require pruning. Maybe then this man would still be alive.

Teresa Bonlak, a home stager in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C. area commented:

“Not just for inspections but an arborist should be hired when selling a house if trees are not enhancing the properties curb appeal. Maybe there is a sick tree or a tree that has branches low enough to obstruct the windows. You want to be able to see most of the house from the street.”

While some realtors and sellers may see this as an unnecessary expense, having the inspection done could actually lead to the house being sold quicker and maybe for a higher price.

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