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Florida Alters Local Tree Law

SARASOTA, Fla. (September 13, 2019) — A new law in Florida bans local governments from requiring a permit or mitigation for pruning or removing a tree on residential property. Under the new legislation ([CHAPTER 2019-155, 163.045, F.S.](#)), property owners must obtain documentation from an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist® confirming the tree presents a risk to people or property.

This article will help Florida residents become more familiar with ISA's credentialing program. Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, ISA is a nonprofit organization whose guiding principles include: research, public awareness, membership, professional development, promotion and safety for the arboriculture industry around the world. As part of ISA's dedication to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees, it offers the only internationally recognized and accredited personal certification program in the arboriculture industry. ISA has over 33,000 credential holders in 47 countries worldwide.

The ISA credentialing program includes the following six certifications and qualification: ISA Board Certified Master Arborist®, ISA Certified Arborist®, ISA Certified Municipal Specialist®, ISA Certified Utility Specialist®, ISA Certified Tree Worker Climber Specialist®, ISA Tree Worker Aerial Lift Specialist® and the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification — all which require passing an exam to earn.

Certifications and qualifications are voluntary credentials documenting a specific industry knowledge base. They are managed by a private credentialing body, like ISA. Credentials are not licenses; licenses are traditionally issued by governments.

The certification with the largest number of credential holders, the ISA Certified Arborist certification, is a credential that verifies an arborist's fundamental knowledge across a broad range of arboricultural topics. There are currently 1,947 certified arborists in Florida. Additionally, certified arborists can earn ISA Municipal Specialist and ISA Utility Specialist certifications to document their proficiency in either of those specific arboricultural fields.

The ISA Tree Worker Climber Specialist and Aerial Lift certifications are designed for arborists to show proficiency via climbing or using aerial lift devices to work safely and efficiently in tree canopies. The ISA Board Certified Master Arborist (BCMA) certification is the highest of certifications offered by ISA, and it recognizes certified arborists that have reached the pinnacle of their profession. There are currently 29 BCMAs in Florida.

The ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) is a qualification that BCMAs and certified arborists can earn to document their advanced proficiency in the art and science of tree risk assessment, which is

the subject of this new Florida law. There are currently 309 professional arborists who also hold the TRAQ credential in Florida.

Arborists who have the qualification and certifications discussed above can provide documentation required by this new Florida tree law. To learn more and to find an ISA Certified Arborist in your area, simply use our search tool, "Find an Arborist," at www.isa-arbor.com.

Please also be aware that there may be individuals who claim to be ISA certified arborists but are not. We encourage anyone that considers using the services of an ISA Certified Arborist to check their credential(s) through ISA's "Verify a Credential" tool available at <https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist/verify>.

If you find someone that you suspect may not be ISA certified, but claims to be, please notify ISA using an easy-to-use reporting tool located at: <https://www.isa-arbor.com/Credentials/ISA-Ethics-and-Integrity/False-Advertisements>. Please also be aware that ISA does not credential companies; only individuals can earn and maintain an ISA credential.

ABOUT Florida ISA

The Florida ISA is a chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture that serves the particular needs of Florida's professional arborists and tree care consumers. Florida ISA's mission is to promote the scientifically based practice of arboriculture through research, education and public awareness. For more information, please visit our site www.floridaisa.org.

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