

The Connecticut Arborist Examination Process As of January 14, 2021

This document is intended to give a short overview of the CT Arborist License examination process. However, it must be noted at the process has been modified to be consistent with COVID considerations. Also, it may be modified again, after the COVID restrictions are lifted, due to DEEP working to modernize the testing process, particularly as relates to the written exam.

In other words, when you feel you are ready to take the test, be sure to check in with DEEP to be sure of what the testing process is at that time. It may be different from what is written here.

This is where to go to find the current information from DEEP: [Commercial Arborist License \(ct.gov\)](https://www.deep.ct.gov/CommercialArboristLicense)

The CT Arborist License examination process is under the authority of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Pesticide Management program. DEEP oversees the testing process and is responsible for all of the final decisions as to who get licensed, as well for registering that person, collecting the fees, etc. They are the last word.

DEEP is assisted by a body appointed by the Governor known as the Tree Protection Examining Board, or TPX for short. Both DEEP staff and the TPX have roles in the examination process. The TPX consists of seven members, although it is assisted in its work by volunteers from CTPA and UConn.

The Examination Process Outlined

The testing process starts with an application that must be submitted, along with a check for the examination fee, to the DEEP. Currently, that fee is \$200.

Once you have submitted your registration form, you will be assigned a date for the written exam. This is one aspect of the process affected by COVID. Written exams are given by DEEP and are by appointment only.

The written exam consists of multiple choice questions having to do with tree and arboricultural knowledge and also pesticide safety. The pesticide safety section is graded separately from the tree and arboricultural knowledge section and is largely based on the Pesticide Applicator's Training Manual (aka the Core Manual). You should be familiar with the Core Manual before attempting the written exam.

Following passage of the written exam, you will be invited to proceed to the second stage of the examination process. This consists of the Tree ID exam and the Oral exam. These two exams are given by the TPX. Both are usually given on the same day. However, while the written exam is typically given monthly, the Tree ID and Oral exam are typically given only 4 times in a year. You must plan on attending on the examination date you are given.

The Tree ID exam consists of walk around the examination grounds, with 20 trees marked for you to identify. You will have an answer form on which to indicate your choice. You must get an 80% in order to pass the Tree ID exam.

Tree ID answers can be given using the common names of the trees – in fact, common names are preferred. If Latin names are used and are incorrect, the answer will be wrong, even if the correct common name is given.

Not all answers have to be down to species, and you do not need to know varieties. In most cases, the genus will be sufficient (e.g. 'dogwood' will be adequate). However, for the oaks, maples, pines and some other genera, you may not receive full credit unless you give the correct species common name. You would get ½ credit for answering "oak" however, if the tree were, say, a red oak.

If you pass the Tree ID exam, you will be invited to stay for the Oral exam. The Oral exam typically consists of the applicant sitting across a table from two examiners from TPX (or those assisting TPX), who will ask the applicant a series of 10 questions on topics relating to arboriculture and the arborist license. You will get graded on your answers and will need to get a passing score in order to get your license.

For many people, this is the most psychologically difficult part of the examination process, because of the in-person nature of the Oral exam. We strongly encourage people not to let themselves get psyched out this part of the exam. The examiners will try to make you feel welcome and comfortable. If you are qualified, they do want you to pass the test.

There is not an additional charge for taking the Tree ID or Oral exams. However, if you fail to pass either one of those exams, you will need to start over from the beginning. That means re-registering, paying the examination fee and passing the written exam before you can move on to the Tree ID and Oral exam. (Note – this is change from the previous policy, which allowed an applicant a couple of opportunities to take either the Tree ID or Oral exams before needing to retake the written exam.)

Based on the results of the Tree ID and Oral exams, the TPX recommends candidates to DEEP for licensing. DEEP then notifies the individuals who have been recommended, who are then given the opportunity to pay their licensing fee.

In sum – the Arborist License Exam consists of 3 separate tests:

1. The Written Exam, given by DEEP
2. The Tree ID Exam, given by TPX
3. The Oral Exam, given by TPX

You must pass all 3 tests in order to earn your license. The examination fee covers all 3 tests. However, the tests are given in sequence. If you fail any one of the tests, you cannot take the next test in the sequence.

Further details about the examination process will be given during the course of Arboriculture 101.