



Checklist for Hiring a Landscape Professional

The services of a competent, qualified landscape professional can mean the difference between enjoying the pleasures of your outdoor space or dealing with a frustrating experience that ends up with nothing you wanted. Here are pointers to help you define your needs and refine your search for a landscape professional. An initial consultation fee should be expected, and will be a worthwhile investment in beginning the design process.

Interviewing a Landscape Professional

- What are your areas of expertise?
- Do you have a portfolio of your work? (One may be available online; if not, ask for photos and brochures).
- Will you provide three references? (Get client contact information, and ask for impression of this company's work).
- How many years have you been in business? What experience do you have?
- What qualifications do you and your staff have? (Individuals may have earned a certificate, diploma, degree or journeyman status from a recognized horticultural training institution; or they may have achieved an industry designation such as Landscape Industry Certified or Certified Arborist).
- What are your environmental practices? (Consider equipment use, landscape design, pest control and ecological sensitivity).
- Do you belong to any trade associations such as the BC Landscape & Nursery Association? (Go to <http://landscapebc.com/> for a list of BCLNA members).
- Will you provide proof of adequate liability insurance? (Homeowner can be held responsible in the event of an accident if the contractor has insufficient insurance).
- Will you provide a copy of your WorkSafeBC clearance letter? (This shows that the landscaper is currently registered and have assessments been paid).
- Will you provide names of three key suppliers for a credit check?
- Are you aware of the *BC Landscape Standard* and will you adhere to it where possible?
- What are your payment terms and reporting practices?
- What process do you use for changes to the original plan / contract or for resolving disputes?

Basic Questions to Ask when Checking References from Clients

- Were you happy with the work done?
- Was it finished on time?
- Did the contractor keep you informed and discuss problems along the way?
- What were the extra charges?
- Did workers arrive when expected?
- Did they clean up after finishing the job?
- Would you recommend this contractor?
- Would you use this contractor again?

Establish These Points before the Project Begins

- What is the estimated project length? Estimated start and end date?
- Could weather or your other projects interrupt this schedule?
- What should I expect from your crew?
- What are your work hours?
- Will you need access to my house?
- What noise should I expect? Will work impact my neighbours? (Home-owner should advise neighbours of anticipated disruptions).
- Are all necessary permits in order i.e., electrical, plumbing, sewer, tree removal, structural building such as decks, walls?
- Will you adhere to bylaws regulating planting, pesticides, noise, refuse, street access; and safety procedures for above and underground utilities?
- Who will be available on-site, while the work is in progress, to guide the project and answer any questions?

Get it in Writing

- **Do not start a project without a signed contract in place.** A contract should include:
 - Scope of work to be done.
 - Type and quality of materials.
 - Fees, expenses and schedule of work.
 - Sub-contractors that will be used.
 - Schedule of payments (deposits, progress payments, final payments).
 - Standard of work expected according to the current BC Landscape Standard.
 - Communication and reporting process.
 - May include a drawing and plant list with cultural requirements, fertilization and irrigation schedule.

While the Project is in Progress

- Regularly check on the work being performed. Use this checklist as a guideline for your installation inspection:
 - Are the materials as specified?
 - Are defined work standards being met?
 - Are installers, helpers, and sub-contractors performing well?
 - Get proof that subcontractors are being paid. (Unpaid sub-contractors may be able to place a lien on your property).
 - Is the work on schedule, weather permitting?
 - Have you received the specified progress reports?
 - Changes to original plans may necessitate a “Change Order” to the contract, which can potentially impact your costs and outcomes.
 - Has your contract been updated with any changes? (Ensure you understand the implications of any changes you request, and subsequent adjustments to payment schedules, costs and results).

Before Final Payment

- Do a project walk-through with the contractor and check off each item per your contract.
- Ensure materials and sub-contractors are paid.
- Obtain the detailed plant list.
- Get equipment instructions: learn how to work your irrigation, lighting timer & transformer, pond pumps, etc.
- Reconfirm the process to be used if problems arise.
- Determine any future service needs such as regular inspections, maintenance requirements to ensure the landscape establishes well, and whether you or the landscaper will fulfill these requirements.

Look for this designation when
hiring a
Landscape Professional

landscape industry
certified



Looking for a landscaper
in your area?

Go to

landscapebc.com

and click on "

Need a Landscape Quote'!