

weighing the options:

What to look for in a

PROFESSIONAL



HIRING A PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPER...

for a garden project can be beneficial in helping with the work. And having an extra scope of expertise is always advantageous in achieving the desired appearance. But selecting a landscaper can sometimes be an overwhelming task. To help with your choice, here are some important questions and considerations to think about:

1 Does the company have proof of Workers Safety and Insurance Standing? Make sure you see a certificate of Clearance and certificate of Liability Insurance. This protects the company's employees as well as you, the owner.

2 Ask for references. Depending on the size of the project, it is advisable to ask for at least three supplier and client references.

3 A written and signed Contract will protect the interests of both parties. All contracts should clearly stipulate all details of work to be performed. Payment, schedules, work dates, etc. should be written in the Contract before any work begins.

4 Obtaining a written Warranty that clearly spells out what type of workmanship is covered and for how long is also advisable.

5 Depending on the size of the project, the company should supply the adequate amount of employees and supervisors for the job.

6 Determining if key personnel of the company are skilled; ask to see certificates of Post Secondary degrees. The Horticultural Journeyman's Apprenticeship Program or certifications through the Canadian Horticultural Technician's program are indicators of skilled, committed employees.

7 Each company should supply adequate equipment and resources to complete the project in a timely manner. Some equipment may need to be rented to be cost effective for both you and the company.

8 Ask how many years the company has been in business and if they are part of any association. Determine if the company has an office or administrative personnel.

Asking these eight questions before hiring a landscaping contractor, or company, will put your mind at ease and help you make the right choice to complete your garden project and enjoy an attractive environment for you and your family.

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After the initial project has been done, landscape lighting can be the finishing touch to your landscape. It is important to choose fixtures that conceal the light source. If you can see the light directly, your attention will be drawn to the light, and not the feature you wish to highlight. For the best results, combine both up and down lighting in your design, and avoid placing them in straight lines. Placing the lights in triangular patterns will create a sense of depth, while giving a natural appearance. Also, set your outdoor coach lights on a dimmer or replace the bulbs with 15-watt lamps, as not to detract from your illuminated landscape, you won't believe the difference it will make to the overall effect.

The average cost for self-installed landscape lighting for an average size home is about \$500-\$2,500. For better quality lighting fixtures avoid the renovation box stores and go to the larger home lighting stores. For the ultimate ambiance the alternative is to hire a professional landscape lighting contractor. Budget between 10-20% of your landscape cost for professional lighting, although more expensive, the final results will be far superior. For the best results hire a contractor who's primary discipline is Landscape Lighting.