

Checklist for Hiring a Landscape Professional

Hiring a landscape professional who works best for your yard, your wallet and our environment does not need to be overwhelming. When hiring a landscape professional, use this checklist to keep track of the professional’s qualifications and experience with Florida-Friendly Landscaping™.

Name of Company: _____

Work to be Performed: _____

Are they licensed and insured?

	Workers’ Compensation Insurance – Verify workers' comp insurance
	General Liability Insurance – Ask for proof of insurance.
	Fertilizer Applicator License - Verify fertilizer applicator license (please note this is the same search application as the “Licensed Pesticide Applicator Search”) <i>Fertilizer applicators are required in Florida to have a Limited Commercial Fertilizer license.</i>
	Pest Control – Verify pest control license <i>Determine whether your landscape professional has the appropriate licensure for pesticide application for your landscape.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified Pest Control Operator License holders or their ID card holders can apply pesticides in turf and landscape bed areas. • Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance Pesticide License holders are restricted to apply in landscape beds only.

Do they have additional beneficial certifications?

	Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) certification – Verify GI-BMP certification
	Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) certifications – Verify FNGLA credentials
	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Certified Professional (FFLCP) – Verify FFLCP certification
	International Society of Arborists (ISA) Certification – Confirm ISA credential
	Other:

Questions and Observations for Your Landscape Professionals

The following questions and observations can serve as a helpful tool when consulting with a landscape professional and ensuring they use Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles in your yard.

QUESTION FOR ALL LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS:

	Do they follow the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Principles ?
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IRRIGATION - Does the landscape professional:

	Calibrate irrigation systems to apply 1/2 to 3/4 inches of water per application?
	Check rotor zones for matched precipitation?
	Set the irrigation controller schedule to meet the water management district rule?
	Maintain irrigation systems seasonally to adjust spray patterns and check for clogs and leaks?
	Check the rainfall shut-off device for functionality?
	Install sprinkler heads to rise above the turfgrass height? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum 6-inch pop-up for spray heads and 4-inch pop-up for rotor heads for St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass and bahiagrass. • A minimum 4-inch pop-up for spray and rotor heads for centipedegrass, bermudagrass and seashore paspalum.
	Recommend micro-irrigation for planting beds.

MOWING – Does the landscape professional:

	Mow grass at the appropriate height? <i>The appropriate height depends on the type of grass. For example, standard St. Augustinegrass should be maintained around three to four inches. Landscapers should never cut more than 1/3 of the grass height at a time.</i>
	Keep grass clippings in the lawn area (e.g., do they clean off equipment and keep grass clippings off roads and sidewalks and out of storm drains)?
	Break up large clumps of grass clippings?

PRUNING/TRIMMING – Does the landscape professional:

	Ensure hedges and shrubs are pruned to keep the bottom wider than the top?
	Use the three-point cut method to prevent damage while pruning tree branches?
	Use the “9:00 and 3:00” method to prune palm trees?
	Check state and local rules before pruning or removing mangrove trees?
	Sterilize their equipment between job sites?
	Use hand pruners on shrubs to obtain a healthy more natural appearing plant?

TURF FERTILIZATION APPLICATION – Does the landscape professional:

	Follow UF/IFAS fertilizer recommendations for fertilizer rates and products?
	Follow all local fertilizer ordinances?
	Use slow/controlled-release products?
	Use soil tests to determine fertilizer needs?
	Adjust fertilizer rates to account for nutrients in the water if irrigating with reclaimed water?
	Read and follow fertilizer label instructions?
	Avoid using combination products like weed and feed that contain both fertilizer and pesticides?
	Does the professional explain what products are being used and why in a way that is understandable?
	Does the professional adjust fertilizer applications or rates seasonally or according to need and do they explain the work in an understandable way?
WHAT TO APPLY	Use a broadcast spreader with an operational deflector shield?
	Follow best management practices for calibrating the fertilizer spreader?
	Sweep grass clippings, fertilizer and soil away from driveways and streets and back onto the lawn?
	Avoid applying fertilizer within 10 feet of any water body?
HOW TO APPLY	Fertilize only when grass is actively growing (i.e., not dormant)?
	Avoid applying fertilizer for 30 to 60 days after planting new sod?
	Follow all local fertilizer ordinances?
	Avoid applying fertilizer when heavy rain is predicted?

LANDSCAPE PLANT FERTILIZATION APPLICATION – Does the landscape professional:

WHAT TO APPLY	Follow UF/IFAS fertilizer recommendations for fertilizer rates and products?
	Follow all local fertilizer ordinances?
	Use slow/controlled-release products?
	Use soil tests to determine fertilizer needs?
	Adjust fertilizer rates to account for nutrients in the water if irrigating with reclaimed water?
	Read and follow fertilizer label instructions?
	Avoid combination products that contain both fertilizer and pesticides?
	Fertilize palms with a UF/IFAS-recommended palm special product ?
HOW TO APPLY	Follow best management practices for calibrating the fertilizer spreader?
	Avoid applying fertilizer within 10 feet of any water body?
WHEN TO APPLY	Contractor shall notify owner of any plant nutrient deficiency symptoms and what measures are recommended for correction.
	Fertilizer may be required only if nutrient deficiencies are present in established plants.
	Avoid applying fertilizer for 14 to 30 days after planting?
	Follow all local fertilizer ordinances?

PEST MANAGEMENT – Does the landscape professional:

	Regularly check landscape plants for pests?
	Identify pests before considering a management plan?
	Choose the least toxic treatment methods first?
	Spot-treat the affected area rather than blanket spraying?
	Use targeted pesticides rather than broad spectrum killers?
	Follow pesticide label instructions?
	Post notice of pesticide treatment?

LANDSCAPE DESIGN – Does the landscape professional:

	Locate plants in site conditions that are suited to their needs?
	Use the results of a soil test to guide plant selection?
	Space plants based on their mature size?
	Select Florida-Friendly plants when designing the landscape?
	Remove invasive plants named in the UF/IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants ?
	Group plants by their water needs?
	Plan turf areas to be functional and design them for easy maintenance?
	Define planting bed edges and shapes to make mowing easy?
	Use shrubs and groundcovers where grass is difficult to maintain?
	Position trees and shrubs to improve the building's heating and cooling capacity?
	Design landscape features that retain runoff on the property (e.g., rain gardens, swales, berms)?
	Use porous materials for patios, driveways and walkways when possible?
	Use plants that provide a food source for birds and other wildlife?
	Use host and nectar plants for butterflies, hummingbirds and/or other pollinators?
	Retain existing clusters of vegetation in the design?

PLANT INSTALLATION – Does the landscape professional:

	Follow UF/IFAS planting guidelines ?
	Select top quality plants for installation?
	Ensure shrubs are at least 2.5 feet away from the foundation of the home?
	Install mulch at two to three inches?
	Specify that mulch is pulled away from the base of trees and shrubs?
	Use Florida-Friendly recommended mulches?
	Ensure plants are watered for establishment according to UF/IFAS guidelines ?