

Tips for Hiring a Lawn Care Service



Hiring a Lawn Care Service

When hiring a lawn service, choose one that understands your goals and uses research-based practices. Healthy lawns are the result of a partnership.



Homeowner Responsibilities

Regardless of who you hire, homeowners are typically responsible for mowing, watering, and seeding bare areas. If these cultural practices are not done correctly, even the most expensive professional treatments may fail.



Professional Services

Most companies focus on fertilization and the control of weeds, insects, and diseases. Some specialized services may focus only on lawn establishment (seeding and sodding) or strictly on mowing and seasonal clean-up. If basic care like mowing and watering is neglected, even professional treatments may not be effective.

Understanding Needs

A thick, healthy lawn naturally prevents many weeds and pests, which means lawn care focuses on what your lawn actually needs, not a standard multi-step chemical program. Fertilizers and pesticides should be used as targeted tools, not routine treatments. Fertilizer should be applied in moderation, with slow-release products when possible, and adjusted for site conditions like sun or shade. Weed, insect, and disease problems should be identified and treated only when needed. Remember, higher-maintenance lawns require more inputs, such as fertilizer, water, time, effort and budget to maintain a specific look.



For more guidance on determining if you should hire a lawn professional, see *Hiring a Lawn Care Service: Making an Informed Decision* at go.wisc.edu/Hiring-Lawn-Services.



Selecting a Professional



Look for a reputable company that addresses your specific needs rather than offering a one-size-fits-all plan. Here are things to look for and questions to ask:

✓ **Avoid "predetermined" plans.**

A reputable service will address your lawn's specific needs, create a customized plan, and won't pressure you into unnecessary treatments.

- How many fertilizer applications are planned for my lawn?
- What kinds of nitrogen fertilizer products will be used (slow-release or fast-release)?
- Are adjustments made in the amount of fertilizer applied when fertilizing full sun versus shady areas?
- How do you diagnose weed, insect or disease problems?
- What weed, insect, or disease control applications are automatically included in your program? Can these applications be limited to being made only if specific problems are confirmed on my lawn?
- Can you please explain crabgrass and why my lawn might need (or not need) a preemergence herbicide?
- Can you show me the specific broadleaf weeds in my lawn you intend to spray?
- Will my lawn be monitored for white grubs and only treated if they are a confirmed problem?
- If fungicides are being used, what disease(s) are you treating?

✓ **Evaluate total value.** You are paying for professional expertise and labor, not just the products applied. Compare the full scope of work—product quality, number of visits, and troubleshooting procedures—rather than just the bottom-line price.

- How often will you be visiting my lawn during the season?
- Do you guarantee your work, and what is your policy regarding unsatisfactory jobs?

✓ **Establish clear communication.**

Confirm in writing what the service includes and ensure you know their policy for addressing unsatisfactory results.

- Can you put all the applications and specific treatments you are planning in writing?
- What services are included in the contract price, and which are extra?

✓ **Check credentials.**

In Wisconsin, any company applying pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, or fungicides) for hire must have a Pesticide Business Location License. Each employee applying these products must be a Certified Commercial Applicator.

- Lawn care services in Wisconsin are regulated by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). These regulations are designed to protect both the homeowner and the environment. Understanding these rules helps you verify if a company is qualified. Complete details of requirements are found on the DATCP website at go.wisc.edu/DATCP-Lawn-Services.

