

Tips for Hiring a Landscape Professional



Hiring a landscape professional helps improve your yard, protect your plants and soil, and create attractive outdoor spaces. Because services, expertise, and costs vary, follow these straightforward steps to find the right expert for your home.



What Do Landscape Professionals Do?

“Landscape” is a broad term. Some professionals focus on routine maintenance (like mowing and pruning), while others design and install complex outdoor spaces. Understanding these roles helps you match the right professional to your specific needs.

Landscape architects and designers: Plan outdoor spaces, recommend plants suitable for the landscape, and create designs

Landscape contractors: Install plants, patios, walkways, landscape lighting and water features

Landscape maintenance services: Provide ongoing care and maintenance

Horticulturists: Offer plant expertise and troubleshooting

Arborists: Specialize in tree care and maintenance

1. What Are Your Landscape Goals?

Before contacting a contractor, define what you want to accomplish. Clearly defining your goals helps ensure accurate estimates and better communication.

2. What Is Your Budget?

Landscaping costs vary widely depending on the scope of work, materials, and expertise required. Simple maintenance may cost relatively little, while a full landscape redesign can be a significant investment. Share all your

landscape needs so a full concept plan can be developed. The project could be implemented in phases to meet budget requirements.

3. Find and Shortlist Landscapers

When reviewing candidates, prioritize:

- **Experience:** Familiarity with your local climate, soil, and plant selection.
- **Relevant portfolio:** Projects similar to yours
- **Range of services:** Ability to meet your needs without excessive subcontracting



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4. Evaluate Qualifications and Professionalism

Do they have relevant certification or licensing (where applicable)? Check for liability insurance. Hiring insured professionals protects you from liability if accidents occur on your property. Interview multiple contractors. Plan to speak with at least three contractors to compare options.

Questions to ask when interviewing landscape professionals:

-  *How many years have you been in business?*
-  *What services do you provide?*
-  *How long have you worked on similar projects?*
-  *Will you or a subcontractor complete the work?*
-  *What is the estimated timeline?*
-  *Can you provide references or examples of similar projects?*
-  *What guarantees or warranties do you offer?*

5. Compare Estimates Carefully

- Make sure estimates are comparable (same scope, materials, and services)
- Be cautious of bids that are much higher or lower than others
- Consider value—not just the lowest price

6. Have a Detailed Written Contract

A well-planned landscaping project takes time and thoughtful planning. Have a written contract in place before work begins. A contract protects both you and the contractor, reduces misunderstandings, and helps prevent unexpected expenses.



Key elements to include in a contract:

- Scope of work and project details
- Materials (type, quantity, and quality)
- Total cost and payment schedule
- General timeline (understand that weather and other factors may come up, so communication is key)
- Responsibilities (permits, cleanup, maintenance)
- Process for handling changes or additional costs
- Warranty or guarantee information

7. Once the Work is Complete, Follow Up

Proper follow-up helps protect your investment and maintain plant health.

- Review the work carefully during the final walkthrough
- Ask for maintenance instructions or consider setting up ongoing maintenance if needed
- Keep records of warranties and contact information



For more guidance on hiring landscape services, see *Hiring a Landscape Professional: A Homeowner's Guide for WI* at go.wisc.edu/Hiring-a-Landscaper.

