Choosing the Right Landscaper

Sign a Detailed Contract That Specifies:

• When work will begin and be completed;
• The variety and quantity of plants that will be used, their placement, and soil amendments (include brand names of all fixtures and equipment to be installed);
• That underground utilities will be checked and building permits obtained;
• The contractor will provide adequate supervision of everyone working on the job, and provide proof they have purchased workers compensation insurance for employees;
• Provisions for clean-up and debris removal; and
• A follow-up maintenance plan, and notes any guarantees offered by the contractor.

Be Cautious With Payment

• Avoid paying a downpayment of more than 10 percent of the project price or $1,000, whichever is less, as a down payment. **
• Avoid paying in cash.
• Avoid letting payments get ahead of the work.

Want More Information?

Visit CSLB’s website, www.cslb.ca.gov, or call 800.321.CSLB (2752) to access additional information and publications about hiring and managing contractors, including:

• What You Should Know Before Hiring a Contractor
• Terms of Agreement: A Consumer Guide to Home Improvement Contracts

** There is an exception to this rule for about a dozen contractors that have filed a blanket performance and payment bond with the Registrar. This information is noted on the contractor’s license detail page on CSLB’s website.
A beautiful landscape begins with a qualified professional. Landscaping contractors comprise one of the top five licenses held by state-licensed specialty contractors.

To get your landscaping project off to a great start select a reputable C-27 Landscaping contractor.

**Does My Landscaper Have To Be Licensed?**

Any construction project valued at $500 or more in combined labor, material costs, and all other items requires a state contractor license. Generally, gardeners who maintain landscaping—usually paid on a regular basis—are not required to hold a C-27 Landscaping license unless they install construction-related extras or do repairs of $500 or more.

Licensed landscaping contractors meet state standards for knowledge, experience, and financial responsibility. They have at least four years of journey-level experience, have passed both a trade and law exam administered by CSLB, have undergone a background check, are bonded, and have workers' compensation insurance, if necessary.

You also should ask if the contractor you’re considering also carries liability insurance. If the improvements are for an existing home, a contractor is required to tell you if he or she carries liability insurance. The insurance, while recommended, is not required.

**Common Landscape Projects Requiring a State License**

- Arbors, decks, and trellises
- Drainage systems
- Fences
- Irrigation systems
- Landscape lighting
- Patios, walkways, and retaining walls
- Plants and sod
- Swimming pools and spas *
- Tree trimming
- Water features

**Checklist for Hiring a Landscape Contractor**

- Verify the license and check references.
- Only hire state-licensed landscaping contractors and verify the license status at www.cslb.ca.gov, or by calling 800.321.CSLB (2752). Make sure the license is in the trade or skill that is necessary for your project.
- Get at least three bids. Avoid assuming the lowest bid is the best; it might not include everything you asked for or the quality of materials you wanted.
- Check references and view recently completed jobs, in person if possible.
- Ask the contractor to provide copies of certificates of insurance for liability and for workers’ compensation insurance before the work begins.

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* To legally perform this work landscape contractors must either have a C-53 Swimming Pool specialty license or subcontract with a contractor who holds a valid C-53 license.