The Landscape Plan

Think about how you want to use your yard, how much time you wish to spend enjoying it and maintaining it, and what special features you would like to incorporate in the design. For inspiration, tour your neighborhood yards, stop by your local garden centre or look at websites such as Houzz and Pinterest. Make a list of your needs, preferences, likes and dislikes; find images that illustrate design ideas that appeal to you.

Your landscape is an investment...

one that can add far more value to your home than the actual cost of the work. Creating this outdoor extension of your own home involves a combination of thoughtful planning, artful design, solid construction and proper maintenance - all important factors in the success of your investment.



What to discuss with a Landscape Contractor

- Assemble your notes, pictures, drawings and a copy of your lot plan for the first meeting.
- Discuss your budget freely. The landscape contractor can suggest the most economical approach to achieve what you are looking for.
- Inquire about the firm's qualifications: number of years in business, staff experience and training/certification.
- Ask for a list of references and contact them.
- Inquire about professional affiliations such as membership in Landscape Alberta.
- Ensure the contractor has proof of insurance coverage.
- Ask about warranty; what is covered, what is not.
- Be absolutely clear about the contractor's terms of payment and date(s) of completion.
- Get it in writing! Prior to making any agreement, have • the contractor prepare the details in writing; read and ensure you understand the contract.

Whether hiring a landscape contractor to design your plan, proceed with project construction or provide maintenance, you will want to work with people you can trust professionals who know their business and the industry. Your best guarantee of satisfaction is to seek the services of a member of Landscape Alberta. These businesses have made a commitment to professionalism in their industry.



Benefits of Green Spaces

Community

Trees and healthy turf absorb and block sound pollution, as well as give people a sense of pride in their community.

Environment

Trees produce oxygen and sequester carbon, absorbing 150 kg of air pollution per year. They also improve water, soil and air quality.



Nature

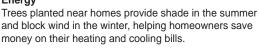
Landscapes and green spaces create ecosystems and natural habitats for birds and other animals.

Home

Landscaping can add 20% to the property value of a building. Even small projects like adding a patio, hedge or garden can add 4-12%.

Energy

Safety



more trees and green spaces.

Health

Green spaces are known to lower blood pressure and reduce stress. Not only is gardening therapeutic, but it also improves focus.

There is less violence and crime in communties with



NURSERY TRADES ASSOCIATION Green for Life!

For plant resources, garden inspirations and links to landscape professionals in Alberta

www.landscapealberta.com

A homeowners guide to Selecting a IDSCAPE



Compare and decide:

Overwhelmed with the task of selecting a landscape contractor? Use this scoring tool for rating and selecting your landscape contractor. This scoring tool can be used two ways:

- 1. As a simple guideline to the kinds of criteria you should be looking for from a landscape contractor, or
- 2. As a rating system to help you determine more specifically the suitability of the contractor you are considering.

Company A:	
Company B:	
Company C:	

Proof of Workers Compensation Board standing

Mandatory: Rate 0 or 5 only Except for single-person companies, landscape contractors are required by law to pay WCB premiums on behalf of their employees in the event of a workplace injury. Hiring companies that are not in compliance makes the project owner - you - liable in case of workplace injuries. Ask for their WCB Registration Number.

Proof of liability insurance

Mandatory: Rate 0 or 5 only

Public liability and property damage insurance, at a minimum of one million dollars per occurrence, are the types of insurance that a contractor should have in place. Homeowners should ask the landscape contractor to provide a Certificate of Insurance. (Also, check with your own home insurance provider to ensure you have appropriate coverage for the changes you intend to make to your property.)

Contract

Rate 1 to 5 A written and signed contract will protect the interests of both the contractor and the homeowner. Contracts should clearly stipulate all details such as payment schedules, work start dates, and the complete scope of the project. Areas of responsibility, such as the provision of underground service locates, permits, etc. should also be stipulated. A good contract will also define procedures for the approval of change orders and costs of extras.

Warrantv

The terms and conditions of the contractor's warranty should be clearly spelled out in writing and should specify if the workmanship is under warranty and for how long and the length of the guarantee on materials. It is important to know the homeowner's specific responsibilities with regards to ongoing site maintenance (i.e. watering) that may affect the warranty. This is especially important regarding the guarantee of plant materials.

Client references

A contractor's ability to handle your project can best be determined by asking for references from up to three recent clients. Look for answers to these questions:

- Was the work completed on time?
- Was there sufficient supervisory staff on site?
- Did the contractor return phone calls promptly?
- Was the quality of workmanship acceptable?
- Did staff conduct themselves in a professional manner?
- Was the site kept tidy throughout the construction process?
- Were extras dealt with according to the terms of the contract?

Human resources

Rate 1 to 5 The number of employees, including the number of supervisory personnel should be adequate for the size of the project. Remember, a small company with a single crew may well be sufficient for smaller projects, providing they have adequately scheduled their projects. Client references are the best indicators of scheduling ability.

Employee experience,

education and certification

Determine the level of training and experience of key and supervisory personnel. Post-secondary degrees or certification through the Landscape Industry Certified Program, apprentices or journeypersons are all indicators of skilled, committed employees.

Equipment resources

The contractor should have adequate equipment resources to complete the job efficiently. It is important to remember that it may be more cost-effective for certain or specialized pieces of equipment to be rented on an as-needed basis.

Scope of expertise (including sub-contractors)

lighting

irrigation

demolition

Determine which specific disciplines are required for your project. The company should be skilled in all aspects or have access to and use reputable sub-contractors for those areas in which they have no expertise. These include disciplines such as:

paving stone natural stone work carpentry water features

site clean-up soft landscaping (tree and earth-work (grading, etc.) shrub installation)

Advance Payments

Rate 1 to 5

A contractor may request a deposit before all work is complete, but never hire anyone who asks for the full amount up front. A good landscape contractor should have the financial resources to carry out most residential landscape projects and cover the balance of costs until completion. For a large project, consider a contract that includes progressive payments after specific work is completed. Make sure the details-exactly what will be done and how much is to be paid-are part of the contract.

Years in business

How many years has the company been in business under the current company name?

Company profile

Does the company project a professional image? Are its trucks and equipment clean and well cared for? Can you reach the contractor when you need to? Has the contractor been prompt in returning your calls and shown up on time for an agreed appointment?

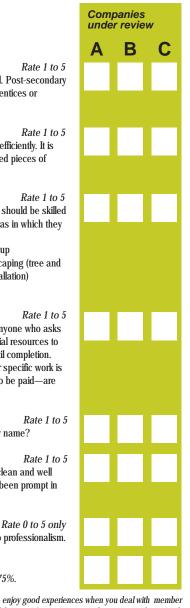
Association membership

Association membership is a very strong indicator of a company's commitment to professionalism.

Totals

A perfect score is 65, so anything less than 49 indicates a mark of under 75%.

This rating tool is just one of Landscape Alberta's efforts to ensure that you - the consumer - enjoy good experiences when you deal with member companies. We find the best way to achieve that goal is through competence, integrity and fairness. Our success is tied to your satisfaction with our members work. Landscape Alberta does not guarantee or provide warranties for any work carried out by its members.







Companies

under review







Rate 1 to 5