

# HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Nassau County



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## Tips on Choosing a Landscape Gardener

By using modern equipment and crews, landscape gardeners can frequently do in a few hours what would take you a week-end. A pleasing and properly maintained landscape can add as much as 15% or 20% to the value of your home. Remember, a \$2,000 landscape is as important to a \$40,000 house as a \$50,000 landscape is to a \$300,000 house. Once the investment is made, all will be lost if it is not maintained properly.

Pricing a job is based on a number of items including insurance, updated equipment, quality of materials, amount of work done, wages and number of crews, dumping costs (the job isn't finished when the gardener leaves the site), experience, professionalism and time. The cost of landscape maintenance should be compared with other home services like plumbing.

Where do you look for a landscape gardener? Check with your neighbors and friends for professionals working in your area. Look in the yellow pages of your local (town) phone book. Contact trade associations such as The Nassau/Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association (631/665-2250), The Long Island Arboricultural Association (516/454-6550) and The Long Island Nursery & Landscape Association (631 249-0545).

Ask a prospective landscape gardener, the following questions:

- ✓ **Are you a certified pesticide applicator?** Ask to see the Department of Environmental Conservation pesticide certification card. Anyone who applies pesticides (weed killers, insecticides, fungicides) for hire must be certified to do so.
- ✓ **Do you have liability insurance and insurance if one of your workers gets hurt on the job?** If not, you may be liable if an accident happens. Insured gardeners usually have higher rates than uninsured gardeners, but they may be cheaper in the long run.
- ✓ **Do you have the local licenses necessary to operate a business in the area?** Landscape gardeners who work in Nassau County, for example, must be licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs. Call Consumer Affairs to find out if any complaints have been registered (516 571-2600).
- ✓ **To what trade associations do you belong? (See above.) Are you a member of Cornell Cooperative Extension?**
- ✓ Ask your prospective landscape gardener for references in your area and contact them.
- ✓ Be specific about what you want done and the quality you expect. Don't assume anything. If you want the beds cultivated every week, ask that it be done. Picking off rhododendron flowers after blooming is horticulturally correct, but it's time-consuming and can be costly. If you want such things done, ask - and get an estimate of the costs.
- ✓ Ask how often the owner or manager is going to be on your property. If he/she won't be there all the time, ask with whom you will be dealing and to whom you complain if a problem arises.
- ✓ **Do you have the equipment to do my particular job?** Some jobs require large mowing equipment, spray equipment to spray tall trees, etc.

**Tips to consider once you have hired a gardener**

- ✓ If there is a problem, don't hesitate to bring it to the landscaper's attention. Don't let it go. The problem probably won't go away. If you are not sure if a particular practice should be followed, ask!
- ✓ Good landscape gardeners should be one step ahead of your gardening problems and point them out to you - you shouldn't have to bring them to their attention!

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