



How to Hire a Landscaper

1. Determine Needs – Do you need:

- A landscape design?
- Landscape installed? Can include hardscape as well as irrigation systems, planting, etc.
- Landscape maintained? This is often limited to mowing, weed management (post-emergent herbicides and pre-emergent herbicides), pruning and leaf clean-up.
- Acreage mowing?
- Some to dig planting holes or clean up debris and haul it away?

2. Research

- Ask neighbors, friends, local nurseries who they have used.
- Local online community boards are also a great place to get leads
- Check the yellow pages.
- Ask Yavapai County Contractors Association.
- Check internet and look for consumer comments.

3. Interview potential landscapers – ask questions

Installation

- What services do they provide?
- How long have they been in business?
- Are they bonded and fully insured? They should provide their contractor license number and certificate of insurance (licensing requirements for landscaping contractors vary by state).
- Do they use subcontractors?
- Who is responsible for pulling the required permits for a project?
- What are their payment expectations?
- Will they share references from a few projects that are similar to yours?
- Do they have pictures of finished projects to share with you?
- Will they provide a drawing of their plans?
- Will they provide care instructions for the plants installed on your property?
- Do they select the plants or do you accompany them to the nursery?
- Do they offer a warranty for plant material and workmanship?



Maintenance

- How often will they come for maintenance?
- If performing weed maintenance, what products do they use? When do they apply pre-emergent herbicides? When do they spray? How do they ensure overspray or wind-carried sprays won't damage nearby plants?
- Do they apply fertilizers?
- Who replaces dead plants?
- Acreage mowing – do they clean their mowers between jobs? (You don't want new weed seeds introduced)

4. Questions for References

- Did they complete the project on time?
- Did the quality of their work meet your expectations?
- Did your project stay on budget?
- Was the team professional and courteous?
- Would you hire them again?

5. Get Multiple Estimates in Writing

The contractor should take measurements, discuss the types of plants that will work for your space and should always send you an estimate in writing. The estimate must include:

- Contact information - Company name, address, telephone number, and website.
- Total cost including taxes - Some companies cannot provide final costs due to variables on the job. Make sure you clarify how much the final cost can veer from the estimate.
- Scope of the project - should include what will be installed (hardscapes and/or plants).
- Schedule - A detailed plan for how long the project should take to complete, including a set start and completion date.
- Plant specifications - What types of annuals or perennials, trees or shrubs will be used, and the cost and number of the plants that will be used.
- Terms and conditions - Payment terms should be clear and easy to understand.
- Warranty information - Including information for both work and plant material.

Considerations before making your selection: total cost, contractor experience, track record for completing jobs on time, reliability, planting and plant maintenance methods used.



Best Practices for a Healthy Landscape

- Allow shrubs to maintain natural shape – no shearing into unnatural shapes. Shearing is discouraged because it:
 - is stressful to plants
 - increases plant water requirements
 - decreases life span of plant
 - can cause plants to become twiggy and unsightly
 - takes more maintenance
 - creates more landfill cuttings, excess power tool noise and air pollution

- The landscape maintenance company's time is best spent on:
 - Trouble shooting and maintaining irrigation systems
 - Scouting for pest problems
 - Renovation pruning – may be needed every 2 to 3 years
 - Cut no more than 1/3 off the plant at one time – just enough to keep it in shape, to keep off sidewalks, to remove safety hazards, to remove dead or damaged branches/stems
 - Note: never cut the top off a tree

- Leave some leaf litter on the soil, it adds organic matter, releases plant nutrients, supports healthy microbes, helps remedy alkalinity.

- Use plants adapted to our high desert climate. Poorly adapted plants require more water and are more prone to insect attacks and nutrient deficiencies. Plants adapted to our climate are better able to survive the heat, cold and wind, will require less fertilizer and will require less water than more tropical plants.

- Landscape trees and shrubs should not need fertilizer unless they have a nutrient deficiency. Fertilizers can promote a lot more tender growth than necessary, thus making them more susceptible to insect damage.

- Irrigation
 - Zone and irrigate plants based on their water requirements. Trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, etc. should be on separate irrigation stations or timers.
 - As plants grow, drip emitters may need to be moved and more added (e.g. a tree requires water out toward the dripline as the tree grows; the single emitter placed when a tree is planted will not suffice as the tree grows.
 - Water deeply and infrequently.



Resources for Best Practices

Weed Management

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/weedmanagementinthelandscape.pdf>

Irrigation Guidelines

https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/generalirrigationguidelines_0.pdf

Tree Care

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/ornamentaltreecare.pdf>

Landscape Calendars

Sedona/Verde

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/landscapecalendarverde.pdf>

Prescott Tri-city area

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/landscapecalendarprescottpvcv.pdf>

Plant Lists

Sedona/Verde

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/VerdeValleyPlantListApril2021.pdf>

Prescott Tri-city area

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/PrescottAreaPlantList-April2021.pdf>

Arborists

<http://www.treesaregood.org/> Click on Find an Arborist (can enter ZIP code for arborists in your area)

How to Hire a Tree Expert

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1003-2020.pdf>

Master Gardener Help Desks

Camp Verde – 928-554-8992 – verdevalleymg@gmail.com

Prescott – 928-445-6590, Ext 222 – prescottmg@gmail.com