CHOOSING THE RIGHT LANDSCAPER

Does my Landscaper have to be Licensed?
Any construction project, including landscaping, valued at $500 or more in combined labor and material requires a state contractor license. Generally, gardeners who maintain landscaping—paid on a regular basis—do not need to hold a C-27 Landscaping license. However, if they install construction-related extras or do repairs of $500 or more a license is required.

Common Landscaping Projects that Require a Contractor License

- Arbors, decks, and trellises
- Drainage systems
- Fences
- Irrigation systems
- Landscape lighting
- Outdoor cooking center
- Outdoor fireplace
- Patios, walkways, and retaining walls
- Plants and sod
- Rainwater capture system
- Swimming pools and spas*
- Tree removal, tree pruning (if higher than 15’), stump removal**
- Water features

Checklist for Hiring a Landscaping Contractor

- Verify the license on CSLB’s website (www.cslb.ca.gov) or call 800-321-CSLB (2752). Make sure the license is in the trade or skill necessary for your project.
- Search for licensed contractors in your area using the “Find My Licensed Contractor” feature on CSLB’s website.
- Get at least three bids. Avoid assuming the lowest bid is the best.
- Check references and view recently completed jobs.

*To legally perform this work, landscaping contractors must hold either a C-53 Swimming Pool license or subcontract the pool construction with someone who holds a C-53 license.

**A C-61/D-49 Tree Service contractor may also perform this work.
- Avoid paying in cash; and never pay more than 10 percent down or $1,000, whichever is less (unless the contractor has a blanket performance and payment bond on file with CSLB; this usually applies to large companies and home improvement stores and will be listed on the license record with CSLB).

- Ask the contractor to provide copies of certificates of insurance for liability and for workers’ compensation insurance before the work begins.

Get a Detailed Contract That Specifies:
- When work will begin and be completed.

- The variety and quantity of plants that will be used, their placement, soil amendments, and all fixtures and equipment (including brand names) to be installed.

- That underground utilities will be checked before work begins and building permits obtained.

- That the contractor will provide adequate supervision of everyone working on the job and proof of workers’ compensation insurance for employees.

- Provisions for clean-up and debris removal.

- A follow-up maintenance plan and any guarantees the contractor offers.