



earth-wise guide to hiring a

# Professional

## for Pest Control and Maintenance

to reduce the chemical exposure to people, pets and the environment, ask for pest control services that are natural, organic, least-toxic, or that use *IPM* (integrated pest management).

### did you know...

- Fertilizers and pesticides can be washed away by rain-water to pollute creeks or groundwater.
- Landscape chemicals are commonly found in springs and waterways in Austin.



Landscape Professional fertilizing.

### Your Service Professional Should...

#### Communicate the Following to You Before Work Starts

- What the problem is and how it will be treated
- How long the treatment period will take
- What results can be expected
- What is guaranteed and what is not
- Whether products used present any hazards to people or pets

#### Rely on Chemicals as Just One Part of a Total Yard Management Program

- Begin with a thorough inspection to identify the source of the problem
- Offer replacement alternatives for poorly-placed or disease-prone plants
- Use physical pest controls such as traps and barriers when possible
- Use biological pest controls (see the Grow Green sheet on Beneficial Insects)
- Never apply chemical sprays to prevent infestations
- Apply chemicals only to the problem area
- Select the most effective and least toxic chemical if chemicals are necessary

#### Maintain All Necessary Licenses

- The state of Texas requires licenses for:
  - Applying pest and weed control chemicals
  - Installing irrigation systems
- The state of Texas does not require licenses for:
  - Mowing and yard care
  - Tree pruning
- To stay current with new technical information, most quality-oriented landscape companies are members of a professional trade association. (Check with the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association (TNLA) for referrals at (800-880-0343 or <http://www.txnla.org>)
- Look for arborists certified by the International Society of Arboriculture

(See back for Licensing, Certification and Health Information contacts)

## When Selecting a Professional, You Should...

- Check the company's records with the Better Business Bureau
- Ask for proof of insurance for liability and worker's compensation
- Ask for references, then follow up by calling referrals

## Pest Control Tips

- With monthly service contracts, make sure that pests are monitored regularly but treated only when there is a problem
- Be wary of pest management professionals who seem anxious to sell a treatment that you didn't know you needed - ask for proof of the problem first
- Do your part by following pest control company recommendations about cleanup, home repairs or other steps to prevent future pest problems
- Be patient - sometimes when less-toxic pest controls are used, pests will die back gradually
- Shop value, not price; what appears to be a bargain may need a second look

## Termite Infestation

- Refer to the City of Austin Green Building website: [www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder/gbpestmgmt.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder/gbpestmgmt.htm). You will find



**Watershed Protection  
Development Review**

974-2550



Texas Cooperative  
**EXTENSION**  
The Texas A&M University System

854-9600

[www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org)

a listing of professionals who can manage the pests in an environmentally-sensitive manner

## Fertilizer Tips

- Have your soil tested before fertilizing. A soil analysis will tell you whether or not needed nutrients are already present in the soil. Soil test envelopes are available at local Grow Green displays
- DO NOT OVER-FERTILIZE! Grow Green **fertilizer applica-**

**tion rates are much lower** than those recommended in the past. Ask your professional to follow the recommended rates in the Lawn Care Fact Sheet and to not bag grass clippings

- Store any leftover fertilizer for future use in a cool dry place; it has a long shelf life
- Find out the type of fertilizer that will be used. Organic or natural fertilizers are preferred
- DO NOT FERTILIZE BEFORE RAINFALL!



Some lawn services provide less toxic lawn care

## Licensing, Certification and Health Information

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)	arborist certification	(217) 355-9411 <a href="http://www.isa-arbor.com">www.isa-arbor.com</a>
National Pesticide Information Center	chemical or health issues related to pesticides	(800) 858-7378 <a href="http://www.npic.orst.edu">www.npic.orst.edu</a>
Poison Control Center	poison emergency	(800) 222-1222 <a href="http://www.poisoncontrol.org">www.poisoncontrol.org</a>
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)	irrigation licensing	(512) 239-6719 <a href="http://www.tceq.org">www.tceq.org</a>
Texas Department of Agriculture	formulation and registration of pesticides	(512) 463-7407 <a href="http://www.agr.state.tx.us">www.agr.state.tx.us</a>
Texas Structural Pest Control Board	structural pest control laws & licenses	(512) 305-8250 <a href="http://www.spcbtx.org">www.spcbtx.org</a>