



earth-wise guide to

# Hiring a Landscape Professional



*this fact sheet is a guide to help you choose a professional who practices earth-wise principles*

## General Information:

**The State of Texas requires licenses for:**

- pest and weed control
- irrigation systems installation

**The State of Texas does not require licenses for:**

- mowing and yard care
- tree pruning

## Resources:

Green Garden Certified Professionals  
[www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/certified\\_professionals.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/certified_professionals.htm)

American Society of Landscape Architects (Austin)  
[www.texasasla.org](http://www.texasasla.org) [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)

International Society of Arboriculture  
 (217) 355-9411 [www.iso-arbor.com](http://www.iso-arbor.com)

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (Irrigation Licensing)  
 (512)-463-7407 [www.tceq.org](http://www.tceq.org)

Texas Nursery and Landscaping Association  
 (512) 280-5182  
[www.txnla.org/search/index.html](http://www.txnla.org/search/index.html)

Texas Structural Pest Control Board  
 (512) 305-8250 [www.spcbtx.org](http://www.spcbtx.org)

## Designers:

Questions	Answers
Do you plan to use or reuse the materials (rocks, plants, etc.) that are already on the site?	Reuse of materials reduces energy needs for transporting materials onsite and saves money
What type of materials would you bring on site for hardscapes?	The goal is to keep water on the land in order to prevent runoff of landscape chemicals; therefore, porous materials are preferred
What techniques would you use to keep rainwater on the land?	Techniques such as raingardens, and rainwater harvesting are beneficial. See <a href="http://www.growgreen.org/downloads/landscaping.pdf">www.growgreen.org/downloads/landscaping.pdf</a>
Can you tell me if there are any invasive species on the property, and if so, what would you recommend doing with them?	Ideally, invasive species should be removed if practical and plant is not providing another benefit (e.g., it is the only shade-producing tree on the site)
Do you use primarily native and adapted plants of central Texas?	See <a href="http://www.growgreen.org/plants.htm">www.growgreen.org/plants.htm</a> for a recommended plant list for general landscaping needs
What type of plants would you use to provide food for wildlife?	For detailed information on which types of wildlife you'd like to attract, visit <a href="http://www.nwf.org/backyard/tipsheets.cfm">http://www.nwf.org/backyard/tipsheets.cfm</a>
What elements would you include to provide wildlife habitat?	Food, water and cover are the primary requirements for a wildlife habitat. See <a href="http://www.keepeaustinwild.com">www.keepeaustinwild.com</a> for details.

## Irrigators:

Questions	Answers
Are you a licensed irrigator?	The State of Texas requires this license for in-ground systems
What are the environmental features on the equipment you install?	Multiple stations and varied head types are usually required for optimal efficiency, i.e., soaker hoses and drip irrigation reduce runoff and are 20% more efficient than sprayers
How do you prevent runoff and evaporation from the system?	Make sure spray and rotor heads are installed correctly and adjusted to keep water in the landscape and out of the street or off of hardscaped areas. Proper pressure is critical to avoiding over-spray and contributing to evaporation.
Can you tell me about the City of Austin's watering restrictions?	Visit <a href="http://www.waterwiseaustin.org">www.waterwiseaustin.org</a>
Are you on the City's Waterwise Irrigation Professionals List?	Visit <a href="http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon/downloads/WWIPIlist.pdf">www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon/downloads/WWIPIlist.pdf</a>

## Pest Control Operators/ Companies:

Questions	Answers
Are you a licensed pest control operator?	The State of Texas requires this license for chemical treatments
Do you use organic pest controls?	In general, organic products have the least impact on the environment because they are natural and more often slow release
Do you practice Integrated Pest Management which calls for properly identifying a problem and treating with the least toxic solution first or do you provide regularly scheduled chemical prevention methods?	Regularly scheduled controls are not recommended. In general, contractors should monitor often and treat only problems
Will you show me the problem before treating?	Proper diagnosis is critical to identifying the best treatment or action to take
Do you test the soil before applying fertilizer?	A soil test will provide the most accurate identification of your soil's needs.
Do you use organic or chemical fertilizer?	Organic is preferred because it is slow release
Are you familiar with the City of Austin recommendations for reduced fertilizer use?	In general, use 1/2 lb. of nitrogen no more than 2 times per year. Visit <a href="http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/fertsolutions.htm">www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/fertsolutions.htm</a>
Do you apply fertilizer before rainfall?	Austin's rainfall is unpredictable; excessive rain can cause runoff sending your fertilizer to our waterways

## Maintenance Professionals:

Questions	Answers
Do you use any alternative fuel equipment?	Hand-, propane-, or electric-powered are good alternatives
How do you recycle plant debris?	Cut down trees can be reused as mulch; other plant materials can be composted on site, taken to a reputable recycling center or put in pre-purchased lawn bags which can be picked up by the City with the trash to be made into Dillo Dirt
Do you leave grass clippings on the lawn or use a mulching mower?	Grass clippings should be left on the lawn to return nutrients to the lawn naturally and reduce waste in our landfills
How much mulch do you think is necessary in flower beds?	At least 2" at establishment and an additional 1" to maintain cover at all times
Do you test the soil before applying fertilizer?	A soil test will provide the most accurate identification of your soil's needs
Do you use organic or chemical fertilizer?	Organic is preferred because it is slow release
Are you familiar with the City of Austin recommendations for reduced fertilizer use?	For full details of the City's recommendations, visit <a href="http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/fertsolutions.htm">www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/fertsolutions.htm</a>
Do you apply fertilizer before rainfall?	Austin's rainfall is unpredictable; excessive rain can cause runoff sending your fertilizer to our waterways
Do you leave grass and flower seedheads for wildlife?	These are an important food source

## Tree Care:

Questions	Answers
Are you a certified arborist?	Though a license is not required by the State of Texas, an arborist is recommended for severe problems

[www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org)  
[www.cityofaustin.org/greengarden](http://www.cityofaustin.org/greengarden)  
 For Green Builders, visit  
[www.cityofaustin.org/greenbuilder](http://www.cityofaustin.org/greenbuilder)


 City of Austin  
**WATERSHED PROTECTION**  
 974-2550


**AgriLIFE EXTENSION**  
 Texas A&M System  
 854-9600