

# How To Hire A Landscape Maintenance Company



# How To Hire A Landscape Maintenance Company

Establishing a landscape maintenance program for your property is one of the most important things you can do to keep the curb appeal and overall value of your property at a consistently high level. There are a number of items to keep in mind regarding the maintenance program and the hiring of a landscape maintenance firm to perform the specific duties outlined in your landscape specifications.

## Why You Need To Establish A Landscape Maintenance Program



Think about the overall image of the property itself. What does it convey to your customers, employees, tenants or fellow homeowners? At the moment someone approaches your property, from the curb to the front door, they are forming their first impression.

What they are seeing or not seeing will enhance or detract from their perception of what it's like to live, work or do business with you. What does the entrance way look like? Is there seasonal color in the form of annuals and perennials? Are the tree branches pruned away from walkways and front doors? Are leaves and debris cleaned up? How about

the common areas? Is the turf weed free? Is the landscape crew just cutting the grass, or does it have a manicured look and even cut? If it's a residential area with a clubhouse or pool, how is that area maintained? Are grass clippings being picked up inside the pool area or are they being blown into the pool and left on the turf? Are shrubs trimmed and landscape beds well defined? Do all these areas add or detract from the value of your property?

## Establishing A Landscape Maintenance Program

With a well thought out landscape maintenance program in place, you are on your way to making that first impression of your property an experience of quality and professionalism.

Begin by evaluating your specific landscape needs and work from there. It's important for you, if you are going to get several bids on your property, to establish your own specifications. There are several reasons for this. First of all, you are setting the standard for the type of service you desire. Second, you are establishing that all bids are going to be for the same basic service. Third, it's much easier when you are looking at the bids during the selection process to evaluate the additional services each company has to offer.

For example, did one company go the extra mile and include some items that were overlooked in the specifications, and note them in their bid? Did one of the prospects make any suggestions regarding making the property more maintenance friendly? Did anyone insist that they present their bid in person so that they could answer questions and discuss details with the decision makers?

Remember, your specifications are a guide for prospective companies to follow. An exceptional company will look at those specifications and tailor a landscape maintenance program based on the needs of the property, then use their expertise to make suggestions and enhance the quality of their service.

Some of the basic specifications that you should include in your bid package are: the contract time frame, spring and fall clean-up details, areas to be mulched, the number of shrub and tree trimmings you want included, the number of weekly cuttings for the season, fertilization needs and any special areas of concern. The package itself should include the written specifications, a plot map outlining the boundaries of the property, a request for refer-

ences, and the name of a contact person whom the landscape representative can call with questions regarding the scope of the work. Also include a reasonable deadline for the bid and stick to it. If a company cannot get their bid to you on time, what will happen when they are supposed to be there maintaining the property?

## **Go Out For Bid**

Now that you have established the specifications, you are ready to go out for bid. The first thing to discuss is the timing of the bid process. It's important to note that professional and reputable landscape maintenance firms are generally very busy, with March and April being the busiest months of the year. If you wait until March or April to start looking for bids, you are doing a disservice to yourself and your property.

We recommend that you have all your bids in no later than October 31st of the year before the contract is to begin. I would also recommend that you make your final decision and contact the company you have selected by November 30th. By following this process, you are insuring that you have ample time to select the best company for your property, you will have a better selection of companies to choose from and you will not have to scramble for a company in the spring.



Where do you find dependable, professional, and reputable contractors? Use this website's free referral system. All companies listed are members of the Ohio Landscape Association and generally value professionalism, customer service, and education. Additionally, look around at the well-maintained properties near your location and ask them who handles their landscape maintenance.

Once you have decided on several companies and sent out your bid packages (three to five bids should be sufficient), make a follow-up call and offer to walk the property with the prospective companies. This is a great time to get a feel

for each company, show them the boundaries of the property, and discuss any landscape-related issues you might have.

## **Making The Selection**

Finally, it is time to make your selection. The first thing you want to do after you receive the bids is to call the references provided by the companies. It is also a good idea to drive through several of the properties currently being maintained by your prospects. If the references check out and the properties look good, you will want to meet with the remaining candidates.

During the meeting, you should ask questions such as, "Are your employees always in uniform?" "Are your trucks kept clean and have a company logo prominently displayed on the vehicle?" "Will the same contact person/foreman be assigned to the property weekly?" "How is communication handled and will I get my phone calls returned?" "What day of the week will my property be scheduled for?"

This may seem like a lot to go through to hire a landscape maintenance company, but in the long run, it will save you time and aggravation. Hiring a landscape maintenance company is a long-term commitment. By hiring the right company and building a relationship with them, you will have to spend less time on your landscape and more time on other important aspects of your business.

***Remember, the first impression of your property is the one that people will remember the most!***

