

Selecting a LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR



*A Guide for
Homeowners*

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION
landscapeontario.com
 *Green for Life!*



Your family's home: **BEAUTY and VALUE**

Experts agree: landscaping is a top investment to enhance your home's value. Beyond that, green spaces also enhance your family's lifestyle. A new landscape can give your family new opportunities to spend outdoor time together, while it improves your home at the same time.

Have you put off looking into hiring professional landscape help? Do you perhaps lack confidence, or doubt your ability to ask the right questions?

Your first step toward a solution should be a visit to **www.landscapeontario.com**; see more about Landscape Ontario and the site on the back panel. Once you have selected a few prospects, the rating guide inside suggests some specifics to help you find the right company for your unique needs.

Test drive the rating guide today!

What is Landscape Ontario?

Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association is one of the most vibrant associations of its kind, comprised of over 2,000 members, ten sector groups and nine local chapters. Its trade mission is to promote the horticulture industry in Ontario, and its public mission is to promote the joys and benefits of green spaces.

Its members' vision and values are reflected by the association's public relations profile, **Green for Life**. Landscape Ontario members really do believe that green spaces and horticulture improve families' lives.

This contractor rating tool is just one of Landscape Ontario's efforts to ensure that you — the consumer — enjoy good experiences when you deal with member companies. We find the best way to achieve that goal is through competence, integrity and fairness. Our success is tied to your satisfaction with our members' work.



For more information on plants, landscapes, Green for Life or how to find a member, visit **www.landscapeontario.com**.

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Compare and decide:

A tool for **RATING** and **SELECTING** your landscape contractor

Use this chart two ways: **1. As a simple guideline to the qualities you should be looking for in a landscape contractor, or**
2. As a rating system to help you determine more specifically the suitability of a contractor you are considering hiring. It's your choice.

Company A: _____

Company B: _____

Company C: _____

PROOF OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE *Mandatory: Rate 5 or 0 only*
 Landscape contractors are required by law to pay WSIB premiums on behalf of their employees in the event of a workplace injury. Hiring companies that are not in compliance makes the project owner – you – liable in case of workplace injuries. Ask to see a Certificate of Clearance.

PROOF OF LIABILITY INSURANCE *Mandatory: Rate 5 or 0 only*
 All contractors should carry liability insurance to protect themselves and their clients from the expense of any unforeseen workplace incidents that might cause damage to your own or neighbouring properties. Ask to see a Certificate of Insurance; it should state the name and address of the contractor, the fact the company carries a minimum of \$1 million commercial general liability, including coverage for bodily injury and property damage, and the effective and expiry dates of the policy as well as the date of issue of the certificate.

SUPPLIER REFERENCES *Rate 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)*
 By ensuring that the contractor regularly pays material suppliers in accordance with standard trade terms, you can protect yourself from creditor liabilities. Depending on the size of the project, it is advisable to obtain up to three supplier references. If possible, obtain references from suppliers of materials designated for your project, such as interlocking stone, nursery stock, timber, etc.

CONTRACT *Rate 1 to 5*
 A written and signed contract protects the interests of both homeowners and contractors. Contracts should clearly stipulate details such as payment schedules, start dates, and the complete scope of the project. Areas of responsibility, such as the provision for underground service locates, permits, etc. should also be stipulated. A good contract will also define procedures for the approval of change orders and costs of extras.

WARRANTY *Rate 1 to 5*
 The terms and conditions of the contractor's warranty should be clearly spelled out in writing and should specify if the workmanship is warranted and for how long and the length of the guarantee on materials. It is important to specify responsibilities for ongoing maintenance, such as watering, that may affect the warranty. This is especially important for plant guarantees.

CLIENT REFERENCES *Rate 1 to 5*
 Whether the contractor you are considering is capable of handling your project can best be determined by asking for references from up to three recent clients. Answers to the following questions will help you rate the value of the references:
 Was the work completed on time?
 Was there sufficient supervisory staff on site?
 Did the contractor return phone calls promptly?
 Was the quality of workmanship acceptable?
 Did staff conduct themselves in a professional manner?
 Was the site kept tidy throughout the construction process?
 Were extras dealt with according to the terms of the contract?

Companies under review
A B C

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HUMAN RESOURCES *Rate 1 to 5*
 The number of employees, including supervisors, should be adequate for the size of the project. It is important to remember that a small company with one crew may well be sufficient for smaller projects, providing they have adequately scheduled their projects for the season. A company's ability to schedule projects can also be determined through client references (see above).

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION *Rate 1 to 5*
 Determine the level of training and experience of key and supervisory personnel. Post secondary degrees, apprenticeship program participation or certification through the Landscape Industry Certified program are all indicators of skilled, committed employees. More information on green industry certification programs is available at www.landscapontario.com/certification.



EQUIPMENT RESOURCES *Rate 1 to 5*
 Contractors should have adequate equipment resources to complete jobs efficiently. It is important to remember that it may be more cost-effective for certain or specialized pieces of equipment to be rented on an as-needed basis.

SCOPE OF EXPERTISE (INCLUDING SUB-CONTRACTORS) *Rate 1 to 5*
 Determine which specific disciplines are required for your project. The company should be skilled in all aspects or use reputable sub-contractors. These include disciplines such as:
 paving stone natural stone work carpentry
 water features lighting irrigation
 earth-work (grading, etc.) soft landscaping (tree and shrub installation)
 demolition site clean-up

YEARS IN BUSINESS *Rate 1 to 5*
 How many years has the company been in business under its current name?

COMPANY PROFILE *Rate 1 to 5*
 Does the company project a professional image? Are its representatives in uniform?
 Are its trucks and equipment clean and well cared for?

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP *Rate 1 to 5*
 An accreditation procedure is part of Landscape Ontario's membership application process. Members of Landscape Ontario are required to follow a Code of Ethics and a Code of Conduct. Association membership indicates a company's commitment to professionalism.

TOTALS *Tip: A perfect score is 65, any total less than 49 indicates a score below 75 per cent.*

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