



The Contractors State License Board, which operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates California's contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States.

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CheckTheLicenseFirst.com

Choosing the Right Landscaper

Does my Landscaper Have to be Licensed?

Any construction project, including landscaping, valued at \$1,000 or more in combined labor and materials requires a state contractor license. Additionally, any project needing a permit or workers requires a licensed contractor. 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 \$1,000 or more a license is required.

Common Landscaping Projects that Require a Contractor License

- Arbors and trellises
- Drainage systems
- 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

*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-49 Tree and Palm/C-61/D-49 Tree Service contractor may also perform this work.

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.

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