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Who can I call to do that? Do they need to have a license? These are common questions received from individuals looking for services and maintenance related to their landscapes. These questions are sometimes difficult to answer, as there are a number of optional certifications and credentials and some that are required, depending on the task at hand. Read below to learn about some of the credentials that you may want or need the next time you look to hire a professional in the horticulture field. A table of links that will assist in locating licensing and credential information is located at the end of this article.



At a minimum, anyone hired to work on property should have a business license and insurance adequate to cover the work they are doing. Business licenses can be searched through Palm Beach County's Constitutional Tax Collector. Workman's compensation insurance is also required, but may be exempted for individuals who have few or no employees. In general, construction employers who have one or more, non-construction employers who have four or more, and agricultural employers who have four or more full time employees, must carry workman's compensation coverage.

For landscape design, a state licensed landscape architect is required to stamp all plans (with a raised seal) for submittal to Palm Beach County (and its included cities') plan review. Anyone can provide landscape design services without a particular license, but formal plan preparation should be done with a licensed landscape architect. The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation maintains license information for landscape architects.

If you are looking for **a professional to work on an irrigation system or repair sprinklers**, you'll want to hire a certified, qualified landscape contractor. Palm Beach County's Department of Planning, Zoning, and Building provides a helpful tool to lookup contractors county contractors such as licensed irrigation professionals.

A licensed pest control operator should be used **to apply any pesticides, including insecticides, rodenticides, and herbicides**. This includes application of products that can be bought over-the counter, if the individual applying the product is doing so for hire. There are multiple pesticide application licenses. These licenses are issued by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control.

Remember, the label is the law; be sure to use products only in a manner consistent with the manufacturer's directions on the labels. Please use and ensure that others use pesticides safely.

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Beginning in January of 2014, **anyone who applies fertilizers commercially** will be required to hold a Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer. This license, like pesticide applicators' licenses, is issued by the Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control. Anyone you hire to apply fertilizers should hold this license beginning in 2014, (or sooner in cases where local ordinance have been passed – which may include Palm Beach County) so your existing contractors will be affected. The prerequisite for obtaining this license is the successful completion of the Green Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) course. Proof of successful completion of the GI-BMP is proof of training, but not the fertilizer license.



There are a number of further **certifications and credentials that, while not mandatory, do provide evidence of professionalism and training**. Many professionals are opting to take the GI-BMP course, even if they aren't required to complete it, to show their customers that they are committed to a high level of professionalism and environmental stewardship.

There are two agencies: the American Society for Horticultural Science and the Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association, who provide additional, optional training and certifications for horticultural professionals. These certifications are not necessarily required by law or by code, but they are great indicators for continued education and professionalism.

If tree trimming is needed, an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist should be hired (although this is not required by code). Certified arborists are trained in minimizing structural defects and maximizing health and longevity in trees, and can be found on the ISA's website.



In addition to the above, tree removal and landscape installation permits are often required. If you're not sure about what permit or license is needed or recommended, check with your permitting authority. In Palm Beach County, start with the building plans review office in your city (or at the county for unincorporated areas). A great place to start is this list of municipalities in Palm Beach County, along with most of their websites: <http://www.pbcgov.com/publicaffairs/municipalities/links.htm>. Some cities may choose to make additional certifications a requirement in the future, just as one can select a professional with more than the minimum credentials.

See below for a table of resources for locating professionals and evaluating each of the credentials mentioned above. A good standard practice is to obtain at least three bids from different companies, and to make sure that the bids are for equivalent services. Products, formulations, landscape area, responsibilities, visits per year, guarantees, etc., should all be equal in order to effectively compare bids. Make sure you have a written contract and that you read and understand it before you sign it.



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Resources for Locating Professionals and Evaluating their Credentials			
Type of credential	Organization	Searchable Web Site	Tips
Business license	Palm Beach County's Constitutional Tax Collector	http://taxcollectorpbc.manatron.com/Tabs/BusinessTax.aspx	Search by business name, owner, or address.
Insurance	Multiple	<i>N/A – this information is provided in the form of “proof of insurance” forms and should be provided by the professional upon request</i>	Request this from any professional you consider hiring. Verify that insurance is accurate and current.
Workman's Compensation	Florida Department of Financial Services	https://apps8.fldfs.com/proofofcoverage/Search.aspx	Search for employer name or exempt employer name. Proof of exemption can be found here.
Licensed Landscape Architect	Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation	https://www.myfloridalicense.com/wl1.1.asp?mode=1&SID=&brd=&typ=	Scroll down to select “Landscape Architecture” for license category and then select License type “Registered Landscape Architect”
Certified Arborist	International Society of Arboriculture	http://treesaregood.com/findtreeservices/FindTreeCareService.aspx	Click “Accept” to use this tool, then search by address, zip code, or individual name.
Irrigation Contractor	Palm Beach County's Department of Planning, Zoning, and Building	http://www.pbcgov.com/PRStatusAndInspections/Contractors/Contractor_Search.aspx	Search by “Classification” and select “Irrigation Sprinkler” or “Irrigation Sprinkler Pump” depending on individual needs.
Pest Control Applicator; Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control	http://app1.flaes.org/ceu/	This search engine will allow you to verify companies' and individuals' licenses, and to generate lists of licensed individuals by category only. A geographical search tool is not provided. Suggest that you search by individual, and choose type of license you are looking for. Alternatively, an internet search can generate local professionals and this site can be used to verify licensure. These licenses must be carried on the person and presented when requested. Learn about different types of licenses here: http://www.flaes.org/complimonitoring/databasesearch/applicert&licensing.html
Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) Certificate of Completion	University of Florida	http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/certification_lists/cert_county_name.shtml	Click on “Palm Beach” to view all professionals who have successfully completed this training. Note: this is not proof of Urban Fertilizer License (required of all professionals who apply fertilizer commercially as of 2014), but proof that the prerequisite was earned.
Two: Certified Horticulturist; Certified Professional Horticulturist	American Society for Horticultural Science	http://ashs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1007:directory-of-certified-horticulturists-draft&catid=87:certified-horticulturist&Itemid=110 http://ashs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=872:directory-by-state-of-ashs-certified-professionals&catid=54:CPH%20Program&Itemid=109	Few results as of April 2012 – could be a source of consulting horticulturists. These certifications may not be mandatory, but are evidence of professionalism and training.
Numerous: Horticulture Professional; Landscape Designer; Landscape Technician; Landscape Maintenance Technician; Landscape Contractor	Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association	http://www.fngla.org/certifications/find-a-certified-professional/	Search by county, area code, or area of business. These certifications may not be mandatory, but are evidence of professionalism and training.

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