

GET ESTIMATES FROM AT LEAST THREE (3) CONTRACTORS

Although it is time consuming, costs can vary widely from contractor to contractor and having several bids can help to determine if a contractor's proposed costs are reasonable. Make sure all material and labor costs are identified in the cost estimate for the same exact project you are requesting.

Did the contractor visit the site to discuss the project and assess the area for local conditions such as access constraints, HPOZ neighborhood (Historical Preservation Overlay Zone), gated community, Homeowners Association (HOAs) rules, etc.

GET A WRITTEN CONTRACT

Before your contractor starts work, make sure you have a written contract that clearly describes the job that will be done, the full price, what materials are included, and when the job will be finished. Read the contract carefully and don't sign anything that is not complete or that you don't understand. It is also good practice to ask for a schedule of work that shows completion milestones for major sections of work. This will help you coordinate your schedule with the contractor and give you an opportunity to check on things as they progress.

KEEP THE DOWN PAYMENT SMALL

Contractors in California can only collect \$1,000 or 10% of the total cost, whichever is less, at the time of signing the contract. All subsequent payments are supposed to be for materials delivered and/or work performed.

It is a good idea to include in the contract that they will only be provided final



payment when all work as outlined in the plans and contract are completed and approved by you/homeowner and meet all requiring regulatory body (i.e. HPOZ, HOA, etc.). This ensures completion of the work and final approval before the contractor leaves the project.

YOU HAVE THREE DAYS TO CANCEL

Feel like you made a mistake? You can cancel within three business days of signing the contract, but the cancellation must be in writing. Send the contractor a written notice of cancellation by certified mail to the address listed on the contract. You must send your written notice before midnight of the third day. You cannot cancel by telephone.

Tips On How To Hire A Landscape Contractor

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Before hiring a landscape contractor, you want to make sure you find the right professional for your turf replacement project. This guide will help you find qualified professionals and explain best practices for establishing a contract.

IS THE CONTRACTOR LICENSED?

- If your project will cost over \$500 your contractor must be licensed by the State of California.
- Verify that the contractor has a valid license by contacting the Contractors State License Board at 1-800-321-2752 or [online](#).

IS THE CONTRACTOR INSURED?

Ask the contractor for verification of their Workers' Compensation Insurance, and General Liability Insurance. This will protect you in case one of their employees is injured while working on your installation project.

SEEK RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from family, friends or neighbors is a great way to hire a contractor. Word of mouth is important to most contractors. If someone had a pleasant experience hiring a particular contractor and is happy with the installation, this is a great place to start.

REVIEW CONTRACTOR'S PREVIOUS COMPLETED PROJECTS

A great way to determine a Contractor's ability to complete your project to your liking and approval is to review and tour their previous completed projects. Seasoned Contractors should be able to provide you their portfolio of completed project.

ARE THEY A MEMBER OF, OR CERTIFIED BY A PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPING ORGANIZATION?

By hiring a contractor that is a member, or has been certified by a professional

landscaping organization, you know they are up to date on best practices.

Look to see if they have membership with the [California Landscape Contractors Association](#) (CLCA), or certification through the [Irrigation Association](#).

Ask if they have any certifications/training to show they understand water efficient landscape construction? (Helpful certifications include: Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper, [Certified Water Manager](#), [Watershed Wise Landscape Professional](#)).

DOES THE CONTRACTOR HAVE REFERENCES?

- Ask them to share photos of previous work and any customer recommendations letters they may have. Many contractors will also provide addresses and contact information of recent projects that may be similar to yours.
- You will want to see examples of how they installed sustainable gardens like yours before.

