



Evaluation worksheets for property managers

Landscape Maintenance Guidelines for Property Managers

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION
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An initiative of
The Grounds Management Sector Group

Introduction

Landscape maintenance has changed enormously over the years. New products, research, regulations, expectations, processes and stewardship attitudes are driving this change. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the Landscape and Property Management industry to excel in managing the landscape in a cost efficient, professional and environmentally sensitive manner.



Why is change needed?

Most Landscape Specifications were developed in the 1960s. They do not reflect today's regulatory and environmental realities. They are prescriptive and detailed yet rarely policed. In many cases the level of maintenance outlined does not align with the Property Managers' expectations or budget. These guidelines will allow the Property Manager the greatest amount of flexibility to either cut costs by removing menu items that are not relevant to the specific property or alternatively to choose higher levels of maintenance. They also encourage "green stewardship" practices.

From a contractor perspective it is very difficult to bid a job when the expectations are not clear. If they bid on everything that is asked for, they never get the job. These Landscape Guidelines are designed to align expectations between contractor and property manager for the benefit of the owners, tenants and public. It splits the job into 3 main areas:

1. Basic Services

These are the minimum guidelines for all properties.

2. Menu of Extra Services

The property manager with the guidance of the contractor decides the level of maintenance and extra service required for a specific property.

3. Menu of Green Options

These services reflect the optimum sensitivity to the environment. They reduce the impact of maintenance practices.

***Note:** ALWAYS ASK COMPANIES FOR THEIR WSIB NUMBER, PESTICIDE NUMBER, AND PROOF OF INSURANCE

Basic Services

Comments

- Spring Services

- Pruning of trees, plants, and shrubs to remove damaged or dead material
- Removal of leaves, branches and accumulated debris from all lawn and bed areas in order to prepare the property for regular maintenance
- All winterized trees and shrubs will be untied/unwrapped
- Clippings will be blown off patios, curbs, walkways and parking areas.
- A written assessment of winter damage will be submitted to the client prior to the first cut.
- Fertilizer
- Weed control on hard services as required*

- Summer Services

- Planting Bed Preparation
- Basic Shearing/Shaping of Shrubs / Hedges
- Basic Pruning- (removal of dead wood, broken / interfering branches etc) – up to a height of 10 ft. (3.5 m)
- Loosening of guy- wires on trees
- Bi-weekly cultivation and edging of all beds from April 15th to November 1st
- Weekly grass cutting – (clippings to remain on grass) To a height of not less than 2 in. (5.08 cm) or more than 3 in. (7.62 cm)
- Weekly string trimming
- Weekly litter pickup
- Weekly sweeping/blowing of patios, curbs and walkways
- Timer control of irrigation system
- Fertilizer application
- Weed Control on hard surfaces as required^{2*}
- Monitoring for insects and diseases (treatment is extra)

- Fall Services

- Fertilizer
- Cut back perennials, remove and dispose annuals, cultivate beds, general cleanup, raking/removal of leaves and debris
- Grass cutting as required
- Weed control on hard surfaces as required*

***Note:** *New or neglected properties may incur a one time clean-up charge*

2*Note: *The use of horticultural vinegars or fatty acids (soaps) can be used to control weeds on hard surfaces. There are also a number of steam generators available. Mechanical methods are also effective.*

Menu of Extra Services

- Power Sweeping
- Winter damage repairs

- Mulching beds
- Major pruning/thinning of trees and shrubs

- Annual Planting
- Seasonal Container Displays

- Planting bed/container fertilizer 3 x per season
- Planting bed/container liquid fertilizer weekly

- Weekly dead-heading service
- Removal of Dead Trees and Shrubs

- Removal of T-bars/stakes and guy wires
- Tree and Shrub Fertilization

- Sodding
- Watering

- Insect Control
- Wasp Control

- Fall cleanup- parking lot
- Replace/add perennials

- Irrigation System Maintenance
Spring start-up of irrigation system

- Turn on the main line water supply and check for any leaks.
- Turn on the controller and program in the start times, watering days and zone watering times for the early portion of the season
- Check the operation of all control valves.
- Check the performance of all the sprinkler heads and make any necessary adjustments.
- Check the rain sensor setting and adjust as necessary

- Winterizing the irrigation system

- Turn off the main line water supply and tag the shut off valve
- With the use of compressed air, clear all lines, valves and heads of water
- Turn off the controller and tag with winterizing date and operator name.

- 1st Summer review

- Review the scheduling of the controller and adjust to match the watering needs of the grounds based on seasonal requirements.
- Check all sprinkler heads and adjust if necessary

- 2nd Summer review

- Review the scheduling of the controller and adjust to match the watering needs of the grounds based on seasonal requirements.
- Check all sprinkler heads and adjust if necessary

Note: All extra menu items must be negotiated based on the desired level of maintenance and unique characteristics of the property

Menu of Green Options

- Organic Turf Fertilizer application 2 x per season
 - Early spring and late fall.
- Organic Turf Fertilizer application 3 x per season
 - Recommended for a healthier lawn – early spring, mid-summer and late fall

- Aeration
 - Aeration (some areas may not be accessible to aerator)
 - Soil compaction can be corrected by core aeration, which physically remove cores of soil and leave holes or cavities in the lawn.
 - Promotes root development through reduced soil compaction
 - Improves nutrient and moisture absorption
 - Discourages thatch development
 - Improves fertilizer uptake and use
 - Increases heat and drought tolerance
 - Increases tolerances to diseases

- Soil Testing/Soil Analysis
 - Soil will be sent to an accredited lab when deemed necessary to monitor any nutrients that are deficient and which products to use to correct them in order to ensure top quality lawns and gardens.
- Soil amendments as required (compost, organic matter, lime etc.)
 - Soil amendment choices will be made based on recommendations from lab results.

- Water audits in order to reduce water wastage
 - Irrigation audits performed by a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor can save up to 40% on your water bill. An audit includes documentation of plant type, soil type, micro-climate info, sprinkler type, nozzle type, flow rate and system pressure. Includes pictures, descriptions of deficiencies, as well as recommendations on how to improve the system to increase efficiency and water savings.

- Dormant Oil spraying
 - Dormant oil will be applied twice per season in spring and fall as needed.
 - Certain oils, diluted with water and applied as sprays, can be effective controls of many plant pests.
 - Horticultural oils are usually highly refined petroleum oils combined with an emulsifying agent. Some plant-derived oils also are used.
 - Advantages of oils include safety, effectiveness and limited effects on beneficial insects.
 - Do not use oils on certain sensitive plants. Plants under drought stress may have increased risk of injury.

- Dethatching
 - Dethatching is performed to allow for the absorption of water and oxygen to promote healthy root growth in turf. A quarter to one half inch (0.635 - 1.27cm) of thatch is healthy. Dethatching should be done as necessary.

- Over-seeding
 - Over-seeding is adding more grass seed to increase the density of turf and to assist in crowding out weeds. Slit-seeding is depositing grass seed directly to the soil. Slit-seeding has the added benefit of verti-cutting the soil aerating and promoting new growth. There is no requirement to top dress if slit-seeding is performed.

- Top dressing
 - Topdressing is a procedure that enhances soil conditions. It is important to realize that substandard topdressing materials may promote weed growth.

Three options recommended:

1. Top-dress with weed-free organic pellets
2. Steamed/Pasteurized top-dress material free of weeds
3. Commercial top-dress materials (sand/peat mixes)

- Low-impact weed control on turf
 - There are a number alternative government approved weed control options both pre and post emergent.

- Hand Weeding

