



HOW TO HIRE

A LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

You have some design ideas and you've seen homes you admire, and identified the firms that designed them. You've gotten recommendations from friends and family. It's time to schedule a consultation. But how do you make the best decision? Ask the right questions. Whether you decide to work with us or not, here's a list of essential questions for your first consultation....

1) Are they educated in their craft?

Landscaping is such a widespread industry that it can be difficult to differentiate between professional landscape design build firms and other firms that specialize in property maintenance and dabble in the design build market for extra work. Do they have good references from both clients and professional team members?

2) Do they have experience at the scale of your project?

How many homes of this caliber have they designed? The more, the better. Beware the inexperienced landscaper who doesn't know what it will take in terms of effort, services and fees.

3) What is their design philosophy? Does their work all look the same?

This can suggest they create for their own aesthetic, instead of yours and lack the ability to come up with custom and unique design ideas. A firm with a broad range of styles is more likely to create something that's purely yours.

4) Do they do more listening or talking?

In the process of learning about you and what you want for your home, are they asking thoughtful questions? Offering insights? They should. It's your house, not theirs.

5) What range of services do they offer?

If they promise "full service," ask for a clear definition and to see an example of what's included. Will they be your representative from start to finish, and does the fee include that? Do they deliver detailed construction documents to the homeowner? Note: At Pro Cut, full service includes site analysis, schematic design, design development, construction documents, bid analysis and construction review. We're with you until the punch list is done. Or, if you prefer, we can tailor our services exactly to your needs—delivering plans, or a design package, working with you or you and your contractor. (Yes, some of our clients have already hired custom home builders when we get involved in the project. That's no problem, we often collaborate with builders, architects and engineers.

6) Who will actually be designing your house?

We enlist a collaborative team on every project, including a Principal and a Project Manager to see your project through. Our experience tells us that multiple heads are better. Integrating multiple team members helps us distribute workload to the person with the most appropriate skills at the lowest billing rate. This saves you money.

7) Can they develop preliminary budgets in house?

Do they provide budgeting information and guidance during the preliminary design process?

8) What do their fees include?

Do their fees include all applicable expenses including building permits, soil removal, restoration to effected area and any architectural or engineering requirements?

9) Do they have a process for ensuring your expectations are being met?

Again, if you're using a landscape firm's full services, they should absolutely involve you in the approval of specific material finishes, plants, etc.

10) What is their process for delivering a professional level of service?

Of course, this also depends on the breadth of services you choose, but... do they have built-in crosschecks, checklists for both process and documentation and ongoing education requirements? Do they use quality, professional subcontractors for electrical and plumbing needs? And very importantly, does the firm carry professional liability insurance? Not all firms do—or even qualify. And even with a professional process, a mistake may happen. Is there recourse for you as the owner?

11 Pineview Road
West Nyack, NY 10994
(845)727-8815



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Reviews ★★★★★



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