

# Department of Enter Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science

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## LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL HIRING CHECKLIST FOR A TENNESSEE SMART YARD

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A Tennessee Smart Yard works with nature to find a natural balance that benefits both people and our ecosystem.

Tennessee Smart Yards is an Extension-led program that guides Tennesseans on practices they can apply in their outdoor spaces to create healthier, more ecologically-sound landscapes and communities. Nine principles of stewardship serve as the foundation for the program and are explored in online modules and practical workshops taught by UT-TSU Extension and water resource professionals.



You don't have to be an expert gardener or landscaper to create a Tennessee Smart Yard. All it takes is a willingness to learn and a desire to take action. Maintaining a Tennessee Smart Yard provides natural functionality for homeowners through working with nature for the benefit of both.

### How to use this Hiring Checklist

This Hiring Checklist was developed to help residents identify a landscape professional who will consider your unique needs, understand your environmental conditions, and steward the valuable natural resources on and around your property. This checklist is intended to help you keep track of the professional's qualifications, experience, and commitment to applying Tennessee Smart Yard practices.

Name of Company: \_\_\_\_\_

**Licensure, Insurance, and Certifications**

✓	Item and Notes
	Worker’s compensation insurance? Company and Policy #:
	General liability insurance? Company and Policy #:
	Licensed Commercial Pesticide Applicator?
	Certified Sustainable Landscape Professional Certification (UT Extension)?
	International Society of Arborists (ISA) Certification?

Work to be Performed: \_\_\_\_\_

	Mowing		Landscape Design		Pruning/Trimming
	Fertilization		Planting/Installations		Irrigation
	Pest Management		Weeding		Other

Describe desired work and outcomes below:

## Questions and Observations for Your Landscape Professional

✓	<b>Questions and Notes</b>
	Do they understand and follow the nine Tennessee Smart Yard Foundational Principles?
	Have they certified other landscapes as Tennessee Smart Yards?
	Will they commit to working towards your stated goals and certifying your yard or maintaining the practices you have in place in your Tennessee Smart Yard?
	Are they familiar with the local rules, ordinance, or other requirements of property management and landscape maintenance to which your property is bound?

✓	<b>Mowing – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Mow grass at the appropriate height?
	Dominant turfgrass species: Target mow height:
	Keep grass clippings in the lawn, clean off equipment, and keep clippings off roads, sidewalks, and out of storm drains?

✓	<b>Irrigation – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Calibrate irrigation systems?
	Estimated area to Irrigate: Target schedule (amount, duration, frequency, conditions):
	Adjust irrigation schedule based on measured rainfall?
	Position sprinkler heads to avoid hitting pavement or other impermeable surfaces?
	Install rain barrels or other rainwater harvesting infrastructure?

✓	<b>Pruning/Trimming/Plant Care – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Identify and document the location of landscape plants before taking action?
	Maintain a log of plant care based on seasonal considerations?
	Sterilize equipment between job sites?
	Compost trimmings and yard waste either on site, at their facility, or take to a local compost center?

✓	<b>Weeding – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Identify the weed specimen and document the location of plants before taking action?
	Maintain a log of removed/controlled plants and review it seasonally?
	Ensure invasive plants will be removed in a timely manner as to not take hold or go to seed?

✓	<b>Fertilization – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Follow UT recommendations for fertilizer rates and products based on a soil test?
	Target frequency of soil testing:
	Use slow or controlled-release products?
	Ensure to not apply fertilizers during wet weather or expected heavy rain?
	Document and explain what products are being used and why?
	Read and follow fertilizer label instructions?
	Follow best practices for calibrating spreaders?
	Avoid or sweep fertilizer from pavement or other impermeable surfaces?
	Avoid applying fertilizer within 10 feet of any water body?

✓	<b>Pest Management – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Regularly check landscape plants for pests?
	Identify insects/potential pests before creating a management plan or taking action?
	Consider mechanical/cultural approaches before considering chemical treatment?
	Spot treat affected area rather than broadcast spray?
	Follow pesticide label instructions?
	Post notice of pesticide treatment when applicable?

✓	<b>Landscape Design – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Match plants to site conditions that are suited to their needs?
	Use soil test results to guide plant selection?
	Space plants according to their mature size?
	Avoid planting invasive or suspected invasive plants?
	Prioritize the incorporation of native plant species?
	Plan areas to be functional and easy to maintain?
	Use shrubs, perennials and groundcovers in areas where turf establishment or maintenance is difficult?
	Position trees and shrubs to improve home’s heating and cooling capacity?
	Design landscape features to retain runoff water on the property to naturally infiltrate and irrigate? (e.g. rain gardens, swales, berms, etc)
	Use permeable materials instead of impermeable materials when possible?
	Select plants that provide for desired wildlife?
	Use host and nectar plants for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators?
	Retain high quality native plants when possible?
	Consider using onsite materials before bringing in external materials?
	Prioritize repurposing or recycling materials when possible?

✓	<b>Planting – Does the landscape professional:</b>
	Follow best practices for planting plants?
	Address soil compaction to facilitate healthy water percolation?
	Select top quality plants?
	Research and understand the origin of plant materials purchased and planted?
	Use mulch as needed in establishing beds and at a depth of 2-3 inches?
	Ensure mulch is pulled away from base of trees and shrubs?
	Ensure new plants are watered for establishment?



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