

## LANDSCAPE CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS

(See University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service, "Considerations for Developing a Lawn and Landscape Maintenance Contract")

### *Purpose:*

- *The following may be used as a checklist when going out to bid for a landscape maintenance contract.*
- *It provides both specific and general information applicable to Burnt Store Marina's landscape needs. Our development has conditions of high pH/alkaline soil and irrigation water with high salinity content. These conditions significantly affect how landscape maintenance companies should treat our lawns and ornamental plants. Both Floratam and Bahiagrass turf are referenced, but most of the property has Floratam. Know what kind of turf your property has before going out to bid.*
- *Bids, and subsequent contract, should detail both inclusions and exclusions of responsibilities.*
- *Decide up front how involved you, the client, wish to be with routine decisions, e.g., replacement of dead plant material, treating pest/disease infestations, etc. Build into the contract the parameters the contractor can work within without contacting you.*
- *Lastly, be certain you have addressed your exposure regarding coverage for insurance, liability, licenses and permitting. Have adequate coverage you/your association is comfortable with.*
- *See Disclaimer, page 9.*

### **PART I: TURF**

#### **Mowing**

1. Type of mower(s) to be used and under what conditions, e.g., reel, rotary, mulching
2. Mower blade – sharp, clean, set at minimum of 4" above ground
3. The 1/3 Rule - No more than 1/3 of the leaf blade height removed at one time
4. Schedule
  - a) Growing Season – begin weekly mowing approx. March-April.
  - b) Dormant Season – mow every other week November through February-March. Use the 1/3 rule as a guideline.
  - c) Minimum of 42 mowings should be scheduled.
5. Clumps of grass present 24-36 hours after mowing should be distributed or removed. If turf is suffering from fungus, all lawn clippings should be removed at the time of mowing.

#### **Edging and Trimming**

1. Soft Edging – every other mowing at a minimum
2. Hard Edging – at time of each mowing
3. Only hand tools to be used around base of trees. No herbicide.
4. Sprinkler Head Edging - Some contractors include this service in their soft edging. If not, someone must routinely clear turf stolons from around the heads so that irrigation is not obstructed.

## Clean-up

1. Blow clear all hard surfaces of turf clippings, including under stairways, around trash areas, etc.
2. No dumping of fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides into storm water drains

## Fertilization *(information from Univ. of Florida)*

1. Annual soil test should be done to determine fertilizer ratios required. Test results take precedence over recommended schedule below.
2. Schedule provided, noting brand and ratios (min. 30% slow-release with micro-nutrients)
3. St. Augustine/Floritam - Moderate Fertilizer Maintenance Schedule: 2-6 lbs. of nitrogen during the growing season.
  - a) February – complete fertilizer, with micronutrients
  - b) April - nitrogen only
  - c) June - nitrogen only in slow-release form
  - d) August – nitrogen only in slow-release form
  - e) November – complete fertilizer with micronutrients
4. Annual Bahiagrass – Moderate Fertilizer Maintenance Schedule: Established lawns have relatively low fertility requirements. 2-4 lbs. of nitrogen during growing season. Tends to show an iron deficiency.
  - a) February – complete fertilizer with micronutrients
  - b) April – nitrogen only
  - c) June – nitrogen only in slow-release form
  - d) August – iron only
  - e) October – complete fertilizer with micronutrients
5. High pH (typical of Burnt Store Marina) – Yellowing appearance can be an indication of iron or manganese deficiency.
  - a) Iron deficiency – spray ferrous sulfate (2 oz./3-5 gals. water for 1000 SF).
  - b) Manganese deficiency – apply as a fertilizer with micronutrients or as straight manganese sulfate bimonthly at 0.41 lb./1000 SF.
6. Fertilizer and similar chemicals are to be swept off hard surfaces into lawns/beds, not hosed down and into storm drains. Note: iron products will stain hard surfaces. It is important to thoroughly clean up immediately after application.
7. After fertilization a minimum of ¼” of water is to be applied.
8. Temperature at time of application must be below 90 degrees.

## Mulched Areas

1. Isolated trees/shrubs require mulched areas around them, minimum of 2 ft. diameter, to avoid damage from mowers and edgers to bark and to reduce root competition from turf.

### **Pest Control (Insect and Disease)**

1. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practiced – problem pest/disease clearly identified and appropriate/least toxic, most effective, method used to control. Application only to affected areas.
2. Temperature at time of application must be below 90 degrees and when wind drift is negligible.
3. Chinch Bugs – Use a pest control strategy that can be instituted to treat turf starting in early spring and repeat every other month during the summer. If infestation occurs, treat more frequently as needed.
4. Mole Crickets, Sod Webworm and Fungal diseases – Identify the problem and treat with appropriate insecticide or fungicide, using IPM practices.
5. Contractor is to keep complete records on pests identified and the treatment used for control.
6. Contractor is to post alerts whenever pest control is applied.
7. Pest control is an additional charge. Agree on a unit charge and have it listed in the contract.
8. Note operating license and expiration date for contractor. Have it on file. Florida law is prescriptive about licensing and certification.

## **PART II: LANDSCAPE PLANT MAINTENANCE (TREES, PALMS, SHRUBS, GROUND COVERS)**

### **Fertilization**

1. Plants less than 3 years should be fertilized within 4-6 weeks after planting and then again 2-3x/yr. (Feb. and/or Oct., and in the summer) for the following 3 years. Rate: 1 lb. nitrogen/1000 SF.
2. Annual soil test should be done to determine fertilizer ratios needed. Test results take precedence over recommendations below.
3. Palms
  - a. Mature palms – 4x/yr. at 5-8 lbs. each application.
  - b. Palms less than 8 ft. should receive 2-5 lbs. 4x/yr.
  - c. Queen palms require an additional 1x/yr. application of manganese.
4. Fertilizer Components – equal amounts of nitrogen and potassium with 30% or greater in a slow-release form. Fertilizer also to contain magnesium and complete micronutrient amendment. (Typical ratios: 8-2-8, 14-3-14, etc.)
5. Berms – punch fertilizer shallowly into soil to avoid runoff.

### **Pest Control (Insect and Disease)**

1. IPM practiced with frequent (weekly) monitoring. See above, Part I – Turf (Pest Control) section.

### **Pruning**

1. Shrubs pruned with hand shears to encourage natural shape and blooms.
2. Palms 1x/yr to remove brown foliage and seed heads. No green fronds removed except when rubbing against the roof.
3. No pruning during or just after growth flushes.

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4. Branches pruned just outside the branch collar. No sealer applied to cut.
5. Sucker growth removed by hand from bases of trees and multi-trunk shrubs. Use of an herbicide is inappropriate.
6. Remove all litter immediately.
7. ISA-certified arborist should be consulted/hired for tree work. (ISA: International Society of Arborists)

### **Mulching**

1. Replenish 1x/yr. during winter months (Nov.-Feb). Recycled organic type, vs. stone, is highly recommended. Organic material (e.g., barks, pine needles) will break down and improve the soil composition and pH.
2. Depth of 2" minimum should be maintained.
3. Trench all curb, roadway and bed edges to contain the mulch.
4. No mulch placed against stems or trunks
5. Billing at per year basis. Separate out from overall contract amount and negotiate as needed. Specify type of mulch. A natural color is preferred. Those that are dyed a color will stain hard surfaces.

### **Weeding/Weed Control**

1. Turf – Use of appropriate selective (post-emergent) herbicides with consideration for environmental conditions such as outside temperature
2. Beds – Thorough clean-up early spring (hand pulling of large weeds with smaller weeds treated with a post-emergent herbicide application). Follow-up on a monthly or as-needed basis.
3. Cracks/Crevices in Hard Surfaces – Spray as needed with colorless, non-selective herbicide.
4. Note: Some contractors use an herbicide with a temporary dye in it. The dye indicates to both the contractor and the client that herbicide has been applied. The dye may be objectionable to some clients.

### **Dead Plant Material**

1. Dead Plant Material – Remove as needed to maintain a neat appearance. Contractor to contact client and selection of appropriate replacement made.
2. If contractor is not responsible for the demise of the plant(s), client pays for the replacement.

### **PART III: IRRIGATIONS SYSTEMS**

1. "Irrigation Systems" can be handled with a separate contractor, or, as part of the basic landscape maintenance contract.
2. Services –
  - a. Monthly - Contractor to inspect/test rain shut-off devices and other components and zones. Shall reset zone times according to seasonal weather and temperature changes.

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- b. Minor adjustments and repairs (e.g., head/emitter cleaning or replacement, filter cleaning, small leaks, minor timer adjustments shall be made by the contractor, but parts shall be charged to the client. When necessary to replace a pop-up head, do so with a 6" type to achieve better coverage.
- c. Once a Year – Contractor will recalibrate each zone to allow for application of ½ inch to ¾ inch of water per irrigation.
- d. During weekly maintenance contractor will note/report any symptoms of inadequate/excessive irrigation, drainage problems, etc.
- e. If contractor is responsible for irrigation scheduling, timers will be shut off during the summer rainy season and the system will be turned on manually, as needed.
- f. Repairs or system service beyond the above scope – charged to client at an hourly rate per worker, plus parts.

#### **PART IV: CONSIDERATIONS FOR OPTIONAL SERVICES**

##### **1. Thatch Removal/Scalping –**

- a. Thatch is a spongy build-up of dead and living grass shoots, stems and roots. Removal should occur when thatch thickness exceeds one inch.
- b. Best time is March – August.
- c. Recommended method for Floratam – verticutting, using a vertical mower to remove the thatch with blade spacing of 3 inches. For Bahiagrass, power raking used, rather than verticutting.
- d. Contractor to remove resulting debris.
- e. Remaining turf to be mowed and irrigated with at least ½ inch of water.
- f. One week after dethatching, apply ½ lb. of soluble nitrogen. Fertilizers must be watered in immediately following application to avoid plant burn.
- g. Scalping (close mowing) is **not** recommended.

##### **2. Saw Palmetto –**

Cleaning up, not removing, the native saw palmetto can be approached in a couple different ways. Negotiate a price for a spring and/or fall clean up. This is an expensive optional service, but some associations feel it is worth it.

- a. Perimeter plants only – This will “dress up” the portion immediately next to the turf by removing debris, dead branches and weeds.
- b. Entire patch – More extensive and usually includes removing the lower branches, thereby exposing the trunk.

##### **3. Annual Flowers –**

- a. Replacement done, noting the number of times per year. Major renovation of annual beds once/yr. Specify the month.
- b. Annual/Perennial Fertilization – Monthly, at rate of ½ lb. nitrogen/1000 SF. Or, use slow-release fertilizer (e.g., Osmocote, Nutricote or similar) and incorporate into bed at time of planting, and thereafter according to label instructions. Contractor is responsible for weed control. Pest control is to follow IPM principles.

#### 4. Replacement of Dead and Injured Plants –

- a. Due to pests or contractor negligence, replacement shall be done at contractor's expense
- b. Due to vandals or if stolen, replacement shall be charged to client at a specified rate per plant.

#### 5. Other Service Options –

- Installation of rain shut-off device for irrigation systems
- Landscape additions/renovations/transplanting – transplanting of existing trees are to be done during January - February for dormant species, and April – August for palms
- Plant or turf replacement (not attributable to contractor negligence)
- Maintenance of aquatic sites
- General hauling
- Major irrigation system modifications
- Interior (e.g., within caged area) plant maintenance

### **PART V – CONSIDERATIONS FOR INSURANCE, LICENSES, PERMITS AND LIABILITY**

1. Contractor will carry liability amounts and worker's compensation coverage required by law on their operators and employees and required the same of any sub-contractors and provide proof of coverage to the client. The contractor is also responsible for obtaining any licenses and/or permits required by law for activities on the client's property.
2. Recommendation: client is listed as co-insured and held harmless on contractor's insurance policy. Client should be given a proof of insurance with this addition. (If insurance is cancelled, the insurance company will notify the client.)
3. 10% Bid Bond; 100% Performance Bond (1 year)
4. Situations which Contractor may deem ARE their responsibility:
  - Any damage due to operation of his equipment in performing the contract.
  - Failure to comply with all laws pertaining to protected plant species, such as the mangrove.
  - Damage to plant material due to improper horticultural practices.
  - Improper replacement or retrofitting of irrigation system components.
  - Injury to non-target organisms due to application of pesticides.
5. Situations which Contractor may deem are NOT their responsibility:
  - Death/decline of plant material due to improper selection, placement, planting or maintenance done prior to the time of this contract.
  - Damage due to improper irrigation components existing at the time of contract execution.
  - Exposed cables/wires or sprinkler components/lines normally found below the lawn's surface.
  - Flooding, storm, wind, fire or cold damage.

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- Disease or damage to lawns or landscape plants caused by excessive irrigation or lack of water due to inoperative irrigation components provided they reported these to client, or irrigation restrictions imposed by Water Management District or civil authorities.
- Damage caused by or to any item hidden in the landscape and not clearly guarded or marked. Damage due to vandalism.

## **PART VI – PROPERTY DESCRIPTION, SERVICES PROVIDED, TERMS, CONDITIONS AND CHARGES (FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSIONS)**

- Identify the location and specifically describe the property to be maintained. Platt plan or other drawing showing buildings and landscape areas is helpful.
- Term of Contract – single or multiple years with a beginning and ending date. Include a cancellation provision with terms and process for cancellation.
- Specify the charge for monthly services. Deadline date should be included and late payment charges should also be considered. Any additional or unscheduled services agreed upon by client and contractor could be billed separately.
- Contract renewal provisions may also be included.
- Contract signed and dated by both parties, and can be witnessed or notarized.
- Other considerations which may/may not be included within your contract. The following are examples only and are not necessarily recommendations.
  1. Days and times work may be done. E.g., Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to one hour before sunset. Saturday work may be done if it is necessary to fulfill the contract.
  2. Where construction crews may park on the premises.
  3. Schedule of Services - A matrix which shows, by month, what services will be delivered. (See example, Attachment "A")
  4. Licensing Evidence – certified operator's license (pest control), valid contractor's license, valid irrigation contractor's license
  5. Organizational Chart - experience of onsite supervisor, owners, managers and key personnel.
  6. Equipment to be Used – stating type and quantity designated for fulfilling the contract.
  7. No Onsite Dumping - All clippings and landscape debris must be removed from the site.
  8. Guarantee of plant material installed and maintained by contractor.
  9. Insect Control Program – specify target insects, program to be used, anticipated level of success. (Nematodes may not be covered)
  10. Employee Training/Safety – specify methods and frequency, including Hazard Communications and Injury Prevention Program.
  11. Employees should be clearly identifiable with a uniform, stating the company logo. OSHA-approved safety gear, e.g., safety shoes or equivalent, are to be worn while onsite.

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12. Safety of the contractor's employees, the residents and the environment are paramount. Contractor is to maintain the property in an environmentally sensitive manner. The use of environmentally sound practices, use of approved horticulture chemicals and environmental restriction on debris disposal (must be) balanced with the esthetics of the landscape.
13. Contractor shall provide restroom facilities for employees.
14. Monthly report submitted to the property manager/similar by the contractor of work performed, observations of any problems to be handled on a future visit, and/or suggestions for future projects.
15. Emergency Work – will contractor perform off-hours emergency work?
16. Unit Pricing of Optional Services – This comprehensive list can be a part of the contract, detailing costs for parts and labor. It will eliminate surprises in the future. (Example of detail: Replace 1" PVC Pipe Fitting - \$1.65 each)
17. Bid Price Variability - Bids may vary widely from company to company. Some variables include:
  - a. Frequency of mowing, frequency and quality of fertilizer/pest control/herbicides, pruning methods (hand vs. electric shears), and such.
  - b. Mulching may be listed as an optional service. Or, mulching may be included but only with a statement that a certain depth will be maintained, without providing a unit cost for the material. The type of mulch can influence price.
  - c. Pruning of trees above a 12-foot limit may be required. Does the contractor have insurance coverage for this service? If not, the client or the contractor may have to go out for bid for this (optional) service.
  - d. Contractor may not have a Pest Control License, thereby requiring the service to be subcontracted.

**Attachments:**

**A – Example of Matrix for Scheduled Services**

**B – Resource Contact List**

**DISCLAIMER**

The information provided in this handout has been gathered as a service to Burnt Store Marina's associations and independent residents for the purpose of better understanding landscape needs and contracting for landscape maintenance. Though horticulture is a science, it's a field with varied opinions. More detailed information is available through the Lee County Extension Service and the University of Florida's Web sites. The mention of a specific product or company is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement of that product or company.

This document has been prepared using, but not limited to, University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service's, *Considerations for Developing a Lawn and Landscape Maintenance Contract*, the UF/IFAS Extension Soil Testing Laboratory, Florida Department of Environmental Protection's *Florida Green Industries – Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources in Florida* and after review of several associations' existing contracts.

**Prepared by: Burnt Store Marina, Section 22 Landscape Committee (6/10/03)**



**ATTACHMENT "A": EXAMPLE OF MATRIX FOR SCHEDULED SERVICES**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Mow</b>	2	2	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	2	2
<b>Soft Edge</b>	Every	Other	Mow									
<b>Hard Edge</b>	Every	Mowing										
<b>Pest Control</b>	x			x			x			x		
<b>Weed Control</b>	As	Needed										
<b>Trim Palms</b>	As	Needed										
<b>Trim Trees</b>	As	Needed										
<b>Prune, Shear, Trim Hedges &amp; Shrubs</b>	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
<b>Fertilize Shrubs</b>		x			x			x				
<b>Fertilize Palms</b>			x			x			x			
<b>Fertilize Turf</b>		x		x		x		x			x	
<b>Irrigation</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Other</b>												

## ATTACHMENT B: RESOURCE CONTACT LIST

- **FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection**

Coastal & Aquatic Managed Areas, Office of  
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer Preserves  
2301 Burnt Store Road  
Punta Gorda  
941-575-5861

South Florida Regulatory District  
2295 Victoria Avenue  
Fort Myers  
239-332-6975

Entomology & Pest Control, Bureau of  
District Office  
12811 Kenwood Lane  
Fort Myers  
239-278-7200

- **Lee County Cooperative Extension Office**

Stephen Brown, Agent  
3406 Palm Beach Blvd.  
Fort Myers  
239-461-7510  
General Web site: [www.lee-county.com/extensionservices](http://www.lee-county.com/extensionservices)  
For Stephen Brown's archived articles:  
[www.lee-county.com/extensionservices/horticulturearchives](http://www.lee-county.com/extensionservices/horticulturearchives)

- **University of Florida**

Web site for horticultural information and the document below: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>  
"Considerations for Developing a Lawn & Landscape Maintenance Contract"  
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