LANDSCAPE LICENCE

Have lawn and landscape pests been bugging you? Some times you feel like you need to bring in reinforcements to take care of weeds or other problems. Be careful of who you call.

Most pests can be managed by home gardeners with the right equipment, product, time and patience. Learn what the key pests are, their habits and when they are most susceptible to control measures.

Proper problem identification is the first step. Much of this information is available online through our web site or in publications available at our county extension office. Contact the Master Gardeners at (321) 697-3000 Monday to Friday from 10am to 2 pm. Bring in samples for identification or ask plant questions to verify the problem. Many photos of plant problems are online and can be found through the EDIS key word search from our web site at http://osceola.ifas.ufl.edu

Commercial landscape companies and individuals are frequently hired to care for commercial and residential landscapes. These individuals often mow, trim, edge, apply mulch and install new plants. They may not legally be able to help you spray to kill weeds in the lawn or kill aphids or other pests on shrubs and trees.

The laws are very confusing.

Landscapers must have a license to apply chemicals but they can only apply pesticides (chemicals that kill weeds, insects and diseases) in landscape beds. They cannot spray to poison weeds or insects or diseases in lawns or use weed and feed fertilizers.

If they have a Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance license, it allows the use of least toxic products with caution labels only, products such as soaps and oils and Bacillus thurengiensis (such as Dipel) to control caterpillars. If your lawn care company uses Roundup or other weed killers to edge flower beds and kill weeds around trees, the person spraying must have a license.

Today, 60 landscapers from around Central Florida are taking steps to get legal, taking a class and testing to get their Limited license. In order to get a Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance license, there are several requirements including 8 hours of training through classes approved by the Florida Department of Agriculture. Applicants pay $75 for the exam, study from three University of Florida references and have been in business for at least 3 years. In addition, they have to show proof of general liability insurance with a minimum aggregate of $400,000. This license is not a mail order certificate. Individuals must learn what is a problem as well as how to safely store and use landscape pesticides.

This limited license does not, however, allow the individual to use weed and feed fertilizers or other pesticides in the lawn. Only Pest Control Operators can treat home lawns.

Pest control operators (PCO's) hold licenses to apply chemicals and supervise employees who they train. Each applicator for the company is required to have an identification card issued by the Florida Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Entomology.

Our office has information on the various licenses required and assists individuals in determining which one is needed. If you hire someone to care for your landscape and ask them to apply chemicals, be sure they have a license to do business as well as a license to apply pesticides.

The next class and testing for the Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance license will be in March. Call (321) 697-3000 if you or your landscape worker needs more information.
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