

LANDSCAPING GONE WILD

Trap

Martin wanted to sell his house fast, and his yard needed a quick facelift. While driving, he saw a landscaping truck and called the phone number. The next day he met with the owner to discuss the look he wanted. He was quoted a price that seemed very reasonable. Martin paid cash in full since the landscaper was so nice. When the work began however, Martin noticed some of the trees were smaller than he expected, and the plants looked wilted. When Martin complained, the landscaper was outraged. He told Martin he got what he paid for, and if he didn't like it, sue him!

Tips

Landscapers are not regulated in Florida. Here are some ways to avoid difficulties:

- First, do your homework and check the business by asking friends or neighbors for referrals. Call the Consumer Affairs Division at 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray 888-852-7362 toll free), to see if other consumers have complaints against the landscaper you are considering.
- Get several estimates. Sometimes the least expensive estimate is not always the best way to go. Get suggestions on what plants will work with your property.
- Never pay with cash, try to use a check or credit card so there is a record of the transaction. Never fully pay for the job until it is completed satisfactorily.
- If possible, go to the nursery and personally inspect the plants to be purchased. A plant in a 15-gallon container is a lot different than one in a 45-gallon container.
- Get it in writing and insist on a signed contract. Make sure the contract is legible and details the size and type of the plants, costs, and any special conditions of the job. Never rely on a hand shake or verbal agreement.
- Visit your local library, use the Internet, or contact the Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension at 561-233-1700 for hints and tips on landscaping projects. Visit their Web site at <http://www.pbcgov.com/coextension/agriculture/>.

For more information, call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray residents call 1-888-852-7362 toll free)