



Call on professionals for irrigation system installation

As Smart Irrigation Month ends, some homeowners across the state may have decided their landscape would benefit from the installation of an irrigation system. Before reaching out to your neighbor for help with this process, keep in mind an irrigation system is an investment in the property and should be installed by professionals.

Homeowners are encouraged to do their research to find the professionals who are right for the job. Ask them about their qualifications. A certified irrigation professional should offer information about their training, as well as references and certification by the Irrigation Association, along with a contractor's license. These things show a contractor has demonstrated basic knowledge and skills required for the job.

A professional installer should also know how to properly assess the water needs of the property, how to design an efficient system and instruct the homeowner on the proper use of the system.

As with other professions in order to maintain their certification, contractors must complete continuing education. This helps ensure the contractor is current on new development in irrigation practices. It's also a good idea for a contractor to have a basic business license. Belonging to various trade associations shows a contractor's commitment to the industry and desire to keep up with technological advancements, standards and trends.

Anyone hired to do work on your home should carry appropriate insurance policies. The contractor should have worker's compensation insurance to protect the homeowner from potential liability if one of the contractors working on your property gets hurt while on the job. They should also have general liability insurance with limits between \$300,000 and \$500,000 for residential work, to protect the homeowners in case of unexpected and unintentional problems on the property such as flooding. Ask to see these policies.

Be sure to get more than one bid when researching contractors. Compare prices and the work being offered. Get all the bids in writing and ensure each bid contains the same details, so you're comparing apples to apples. The lowest bid isn't always the best value.

Once a contractor is selected, get the contract in writing. The document should include proper identification of workers (including names and licensing numbers), a complete description of the work to be done and a list of materials that will be used. Also, include payment arrangements, details on products or work guarantees, approximate completion date and a statement indicating the contractor will clean up and remove debris when the job is complete.

A smart irrigation system is only as smart as the professional installer and the homeowner who uses it. Make the most of this investment.