

Landscaping Essentials 101: Sanibel Vegetation Committee's Tips for Sanibel Homeowners



(Author's Note: This is the twenty-seventh in a series of articles by members of the City of Sanibel Vegetation Committee dealing with vegetative matters of concern to island residents. Members of the Vegetation Committee are Sanibel residents appointed by City Council for one-year terms. To be considered for appointment, contact the City Manager's Office at (239) 472-3700.)



So, you finally made it; you own some property on one of the most serene places on the Gulf Coast. Or maybe you have been around for a while. Either way, you are looking to become more aware of your surroundings, more specifically your yard. As a steward of our Sanctuary island, you are responsible for the landscaping activity on your property and how it can affect neighboring properties.

Ensuring a sense of individuality, civic pride and satisfaction when maintaining your slice of paradise will require a solid understanding of Sanibel's rules and regulations. Landscaping work can be done by you, as the property owner, or you can hire a contractor. Projects can range from routine lawn mowing or yard waste cleanup, modifications to the landscaping profile, fertilizing, irrigating, and, at times, pest control. Because there are a variety of options, it might be necessary to involve multiple contractors.

The City of Sanibel requires vegetation contractors and fertilizer applicators to participate in a Vegetation Competency and Fertilizer Endorsement course and successfully pass an exam. Contractors that trim mangroves must also have proper certifications or credentials that designate them as a Professional Mangrove Trimmer. This ensures contractors understand Sanibel's regulations, allowing them to help property owners understand the local requirements associated with the yard maintenance expectations. In some cases, your work may require a permit to authorize the execution of the landscape project. The City maintains a publicly available list of

certified contractors: <http://www.mysanibel.com/content/download/26004/165617>. Safe, quality and compliant work is a benefit to you, the neighborhood and the environment.

If you decide that hiring a contractor is the best course of action, it is important to maintain open and routine communication. To assist you, the Vegetation Committee has developed a Landscape Contractor Checklist and recommends you review the following items with your contractor:

Contract or Agreement

- ✓ Does the contractor have the necessary licensing and business tax receipt to perform the work?
- ✓ Is the contractor's City vegetation competency, fertilizer endorsement, and/or Professional Mangrove Trimmer (PMT) certification current and will a credentialed staff member be on-site while work is occurring?
- ✓ Is the contractor's State pest control certification current and is the credentialed supervisor on-site while work is occurring?
- ✓ Do references check out for quality, timeliness and accuracy of the work performed?
- ✓ Is the contractor cognizant of the permitting requirements for the work scope?
- ✓ If a violation occurs, how will it be addressed?



Landscaping & Contractor Oversight

- ✓ Is work being performed in accordance with the City's vegetation standards, fertilizer ordinance, and mangrove trimming and preservation ordinance?
- ✓ When installing new landscaping, does the landscape design reflect what is installed on-site? Does it conform to Land Development Code requirements?
- ✓ Are you planting the right plant in the right place?
- ✓ Is the plant you want to remove native or non-native? A Vegetation Permit is required for removal of native species.
- ✓ Why must the plant be removed? Removal of native vegetation may be permitted for safety reasons and/or when it causes damage to structures or compromises structural integrity.
- ✓ Does the plant have to be removed? Do other options exist?
- ✓ Are you requesting work that requires trimming in excess of 25% of the leaf surface area of a native plant? If so, a vegetation permit is required.
- ✓ Are you applying for the appropriate permits that are required to perform the work or have you authorized your contractor to do so?
- ✓ Are City inspections being scheduled and are expectations as well as permit conditions being met?

- ✓ Do you know the composition of the fertilizer that is being applied to your lawn? Have you asked to see fertilizer logs?
- ✓ How will you track progress if you are not present? Who is your agent? Are you getting written progress reports?
- ✓ Have you had conversations with your neighbors to be sure the work is not negatively impacting their lot? You may learn from their experiences, saving you time and money.
- ✓ Will your landscape modifications affect surface water runoff across property lines or have you disrupted the stormwater retention capabilities? If so, it would be wise to consult with the City's Planning Branch and Public Works Division to ensure a violation does not occur.
- ✓ Are you comfortable the work is performed using safe practices?
- ✓ Is the vehicle/equipment stored in a safe and authorized location?
- ✓ Are underground utilities clearly marked prior to work?
- ✓ Will waste be hauled off or bundled for waste pickup (in accordance with waste-hauler requirements)?
- ✓ Is the mulch placed in an area where a rainstorm might wash mulch into unwanted places such as your driveway or a stormwater catchment system?
- ✓ Are grass clippings and leaves being blown/raked in such away that prevents them from entering a waterbody?

Remember, the Vegetation Committee and the Natural Resources Department stand ready to assist you in your landscaping program. We encourage you to review and use the Vegetation Committee's Landscape Contractor Checklist when hiring a vegetation contractor and to help you manage and oversee their work on your property. By adhering to local environmental regulations, you are doing your part to help protect the sanctuary characteristics of our beautiful island.

Where can I learn more about native plants on Sanibel? The Vegetation Committee hosts free plant walks from November to April at City Hall to view and discuss the use of native plants. Everyone and their questions are welcome!

Go native with the right help!

To view pictures of the Invasive Exotic Plants "Worst of the Worst" or the City's "The Alien Invasion" brochure, visit the City's website at <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources/Vegetation-Information/Exotic-Vegetation/Other-Invasive-Exotic-Vegetation> or contact the City's Natural Resources Department at 472-3700.

To read other Vegetation Committee articles in this series please visit the City of Sanibel's Natural Resources Department website: <http://www.mysanibel.com/Departments/Natural-Resources>