



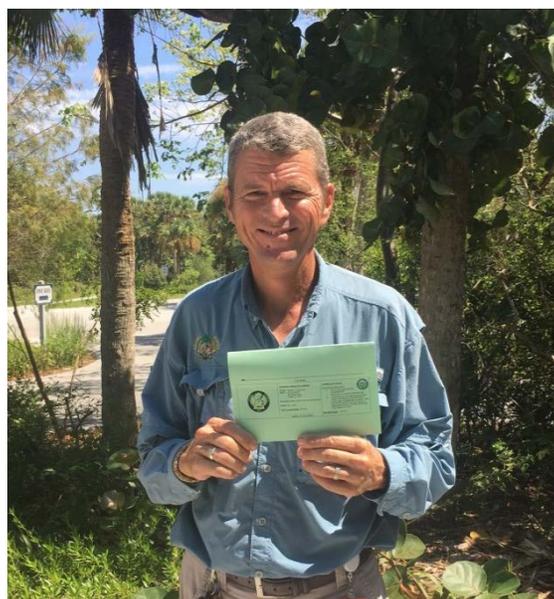
## What You Should Know When Hiring a Landscaper

*(Author's Note: This is the nineteenth 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.)*

Sanibel is fortunate to have an abundance of lush vegetation, and because of this, seasonal and full-time residents frequently need help with maintaining “the look” we all enjoy! This article will help to answer some frequently asked questions regarding landscaping and landscaper selection.

Why do we have vegetation standards and requirements on Sanibel? The purpose is easy to explain! “To preserve and protect vegetation from improper planting, transplanting, removing, pruning, trimming or damage or destruction”, as stated in the City of Sanibel’s Vegetation Standards. The retention of native plants is part of the Sanibel Plan, which ensures the conservation and protection of our ecosystems and wildlife. The Vegetation Standards require that for new development, the landscape must be at least 75% native plants in three categories: trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. Furthermore, the use of native plants is also encouraged for existing landscape projects.

Why should I hire a licensed contractor? The City requires vegetation contractors working on Sanibel to obtain a vegetation competency card, certification achieved by passing a written test covering Sanibel’s Vegetation Standards and a field plant identification test. When working on Sanibel there must be at least one licensed landscaper on-site to oversee any type of vegetation work. This helps to ensure compliance with the Vegetation Standards. Hiring a licensed contractor is also important to homeowners because it protects the property owner from potential litigation should an unlicensed vegetation worker be injured while on the job.



**Steve Schweitzer, Tradesworker, City of Sanibel Public Works Department, displays his vegetation competency card.**

What can your “yard person” do without a vegetation competency card? Landscape companies may cut grass, edge, or blow clippings without a vegetation competency card. All other activities, such as trimming or pruning, require a vegetation competency card.

Can my landscaper trim mangroves? The State of Florida’s 1996 Mangrove Trimming and Preservation Act requires mangroves to be trimmed by professional mangrove trimmers. Sanibel’s professional mangrove trimmers are required to take a mangrove competency test separate from the vegetation competency course. Additionally, ALL mangrove trimming activity requires notification to the City.

How do I find a licensed landscaper? A comprehensive list of licensed vegetation contractors and professional mangrove trimmers can be found on the City’s website: <http://www.mysanibel.com/content/download/24058/149710>

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>*