

## What License do I Need? ~ Guidance for Seeking Green Industry Credentials

University of Florida / IFAS Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service



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What license do I need? How can I stand out as a qualified, licensed professional? *These are common questions received from individuals who want to enter or excel in the green industry in Palm Beach County. Read below to learn about some of the credentials that you may want or need. A table of links that will assist in locating licensing and credential information is located at the end of this article.*



**At a minimum**, anyone who works on any property should have an occupational license (now referred to as “Local Business Tax” and insurance adequate to cover the work they are doing. Occupational licenses can be obtained through Palm Beach County’s Constitutional Tax Collector. Workman’s compensation insurance is also required, but may be exempted for individuals who have few or no employees. In general, construction employers who have one or more, non-construction employers who have four or more, and agricultural employers who have four or more full time employees, must carry workman’s compensation coverage.

**For landscape design**, all plans must be stamped by a state licensed landscape architect (with a raised seal) for submittal to Palm Beach County (and its included cities’) plan review. Anyone can provide landscape design services without a particular license, but formal plan preparation should be done with a licensed landscape architect. To become a registered, licensed LA in Florida you must have a degree in Landscape Architecture and one year of experience. Then, you’ll need to pass the Landscape Architectural Registration Examination (LARE) through the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards and take the Florida laws and rules examination through the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Those without a degree in Landscape Architecture will be considered for licensure with six years of experience under a licensed, registered landscape architect with acceptable plans and samples of projects they have worked on.

If you are looking **to work on irrigation systems or repair sprinklers**, you’ll need to become a certified Irrigation Sprinkler Contractor. Palm Beach County’s Department of Planning, Zoning, and Building, Contractor Certification Division, reviews applications on a monthly basis. Once approved, you will be given information on taking the exam from one of two county vendors.

You should become a licensed pest control operator to operate a business that applies **any pesticides, including insecticides, rodenticides, and herbicides** in, on or under a structure, lawn, or ornamental. This includes application of products that can be bought over-the counter, if you are doing so for hire. There are multiple pesticide application licenses. These licenses are issued by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control.

**Employees of landscape maintenance companies** can be certified to use limited pesticides, limited equipment, and in limited circumstances. This license is issued by the Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control.

Beginning in January of 2014, **anyone who applies fertilizers commercially** will be required to hold a Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer. This license, like pesticide applicators’ licenses, is issued by the Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control. Anyone who applies fertilizers should hold this license beginning in 2014, (or sooner in cases where local ordinance have been passed). The prerequisite for obtaining this license is the successful completion of the Green Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) course. Successful completion of the GI-BMP is proof of training, but not the fertilizer license.

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**Remember, the label is the law; be sure to use products only in a manner consistent with the manufacturer’s directions on the labels. Please use and ensure that others use pesticides safely.**

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There are a number of further **certifications and credentials that, while not mandatory, do provide evidence of professionalism and training**. Many professionals are opting to take the GI-BMP course, even if they aren't required to complete it, to show their customers that they are committed to a high level of professionalism and environmental stewardship.



There are two agencies: the American Society for Horticultural Science and the Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association, who provide additional, optional training and certifications for horticultural professionals. These certifications are not necessarily required by law or by code, but they are great indicators for continued education and professionalism.

**If you wish to offer tree trimming services**, you should become an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist (although this is not required by code). Certified arborists are trained in minimizing structural defects and maximizing health and longevity in trees. To be eligible to take the exam you must be trained and knowledgeable in all aspects of arboriculture and should have three or more years of full-time, eligible, practical work experience in arboriculture and/or a degree in the field of arboriculture, horticulture, landscape architecture, or forestry.



In addition to the above, tree removal and landscape installation permits are often required. If you're not sure about what permit or license is needed or recommended, check with the permitting authority over the property you are working in. In Palm Beach County, start with the building plans review office in the city (or at the county for unincorporated areas). A great place to start is this list of municipalities in Palm Beach County, along with most of their websites:

<http://www.pbcgov.com/publicaffairs/municipalities/links.htm>. Some cities may make additional certifications a requirement now or in the future.



See below for a table of resources for obtaining each of the credentials mentioned above. We recommend that you attend continuing education courses to keep yourself updated on current issues and research related to the green industry. For more information on continuing educational programs offered by University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service call 561-233-1700 or visit [pbcgov.com/coextension](http://pbcgov.com/coextension).

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Resources for Seeking Professional Credentials			
Type of credential	Organization	Web Site	Tips
Occupational License	Palm Beach County's Constitutional Tax Collector	<a href="http://www.taxcollectorpbc.com/services_business_tax_receipts.shtml">http://www.taxcollectorpbc.com/services_business_tax_receipts.shtml</a>	The application, located at <a href="http://www.taxcollectorpbc.com/forms/business/PBCTC_65.pdf">http://www.taxcollectorpbc.com/forms/business/PBCTC_65.pdf</a> , will advise you on zoning, licensing, and fictitious name requirements.
Insurance	Contact a Florida licensed insurance agent	<i>N/A – insurance is provided by individual insurance companies.</i>	Customers or regulatory authorities may request “proof of insurance” forms to verify that insurance is accurate and current.
Workman's Compensation	Contact a Florida licensed insurance agent	<i>N/A – insurance is provided by individual insurance companies.</i>	Florida Department of Financial Services provides comprehensive detail on coverage requirements and proof or coverage or exemption at <a href="http://www.myfloridacfo.com/WC/employer/index.html">http://www.myfloridacfo.com/WC/employer/index.html</a>
Licensed Landscape Architect	Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards & Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation & Pearson Testing	<a href="http://www.clarb.org">Clarb.org</a> & <a href="http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/larch/index.html">http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/larch/index.html</a> & <a href="http://www.pearsonvue.com/">http://www.pearsonvue.com/</a>	The Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards administers the exam, except for Section F, which is administered by Pearson Vue (the state's contracted testing vendor).
Certified Arborist	International Society of Arboriculture	<a href="http://www.isa-arbor.com/certification/becomeCertified/index.aspx">http://www.isa-arbor.com/certification/becomeCertified/index.aspx</a>	Most tests are now computer based. Download the certification guide and application form on this site.
Irrigation Contractor	Palm Beach County's Department of Planning, Zoning, and Building – Contractor Certification Division	<a href="http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/contractors/apps.htm">http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/contractors/apps.htm</a>	See here (page 29) for the application and study materials: <a href="http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/contractors/forms/exam_info_book_list.pdf">http://www.pbcgov.com/pzb/contractors/forms/exam_info_book_list.pdf</a> . Applications are due the first Friday of each month. After Palm Beach County's licensing board approves your application, you will receive testing instructions.
Pest Control Operator; Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer; Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Bureau of Entomology and Pest Control	<a href="http://www.safepesticideuse.com/aes-ent/index.html">http://www.safepesticideuse.com/aes-ent/index.html</a>	Learn about different types of licenses here: <a href="http://www.safepesticideuse.com/aes-ent/licenseandcert.html">http://www.safepesticideuse.com/aes-ent/licenseandcert.html</a>
Green Industries Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) Certificate of Completion	University of Florida and Florida Department of Environmental Protection	<a href="https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu/gibmp/workshop/register/listGIBMPWorkshops.faces">https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu/gibmp/workshop/register/listGIBMPWorkshops.faces</a>	Search by county or date. Or, sign up for online testing here: <a href="https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu/gibmp/study/featureCourses-frame.faces">https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu/gibmp/study/featureCourses-frame.faces</a> .
Two: Certified Horticulturist; Certified Professional Horticulturist	American Society for Horticultural Science	<a href="http://www.ashs.org">ashs.org</a>	ASHS – click on careers and then type of certification. These certifications may not be mandatory, but are evidence of professionalism and training.
Numerous: Horticulture Professional; Landscape Designer; Landscape Technician; Landscape Maintenance Technician; Landscape Contractor	Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association	<a href="http://www.fngla.org/certifications/index.aspx">http://www.fngla.org/certifications/index.aspx</a>	Click on desired certification on the left side of the page. These certifications may not be mandatory, but are evidence of professionalism and training.

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