

Garden maintenance

Business start-up guide

Garden maintenance industry overview

The garden maintenance industry has been affected by drought conditions and water restrictions across Australia. However, demand for gardening services is increasing from middle to upper socio-economic households, and aged and physically incapable people.

Garden maintenance operators mow lawns, prune trees and shrubs, water plants and remove garden refuse.

Starting or buying a garden maintenance business involves many essential steps. Legally, you must ensure that you apply for and receive the correct licences.

This guide explains how to start a garden maintenance business in Queensland. It will help you understand the challenges and opportunities of entering the garden maintenance industry so you can make good business decisions.

Getting into the garden maintenance industry

Before you start a garden maintenance business in Queensland, you need to understand how the industry works, what things you need to consider in your planning, and the legal requirements you must meet.

Finding a competitive edge in Queensland's garden maintenance industry

Competition in Queensland's garden maintenance industry comes from landscape gardeners that provide similar (but usually more complex) services, as well as from customers who decide to do their own gardening to save money.

To compete with landscape gardeners and also offer services that customers may not be able to do

themselves, you can add services to your garden maintenance business, such as:

- rubbish removal
- cutting and removing trees
- basic landscaping
- fertilising plants and lawns.

At entry-level, competition for lawn mowing services is mainly driven by price. To establish a garden maintenance business, it is important to build up a list of regular customers by providing great service at a low price. As they become loyal to your service, they will recommend you to friends and are more likely to pay higher prices for your quality services.

Also, there is more demand for gardening services in spring and autumn so you should consider starting your new business during either of these seasons.

Key success factors for a garden maintenance business

To start a successful garden maintenance business, you need to:

- offer a range of gardening goods and services (one-stop shop)
- grow and develop a loyal customer base
- use specialist equipment or facilities
- effectively communicate and negotiate
- promote your services to the right markets
- provide high-quality services.

Garden maintenance industry entry barriers

Garden maintenance in any local market is generally small and not dominated by 1 major company. It is easy to enter the garden maintenance industry because there may be industry specific licences or regulatory requirements, depending on the work required. Also, garden maintenance equipment is cheap, such as:

- lawn mowers
- whipper-snippers
- basic gardening tools (e.g. spades, rakes)

- vehicles and trailers - to carry equipment and remove garden refuse.

Extra equipment, such as blowers, hedge trimmers and lawn edgers are optional, but it is worthwhile to buy them to save time and increase your business productivity.

(Source IBISWorld, March 2012)

Garden maintenance industry requirements

When starting a garden maintenance business you need to consider the following requirements.

Companies operating as trade contractors where project value is more than \$3300 (including GST) (including materials & labour)

To operate as a company and work as a trade contractor on a project where work value is over \$3300, you may need a Contractor Licence - Trade Contractors (Company) from the [Queensland Building Services Authority \(QBSA\)](#). A company doing building work must employ a nominated supervisor who is licensed in the same class of work as the company. Licence costs vary depending on the work you will do, so check with QBSA when you apply. This licence cannot be transferred.

Operators working as trade contractors where project value is more than \$3300 (including GST)

To work on a project as a trade contractor where work value is more than \$3300, you may need a Contractor Licence - Trade Contractors from the [Queensland Building Services Authority \(QBSA\)](#). Applicants must meet technical and managerial qualifications as well as the experience and financial requirements. Licence costs vary depending on the work you will do, so check with QBSA when you apply. This licence cannot be transferred.

Registering building or construction industry employees for long service leave

To register employees in the building or construction industry for long service leave, you may need to apply for employee registration from [QLearn](#). Registration is required to employ eligible workers in the building and construction industry.

Using equipment in your work

Depending on which equipment you use to do your work, you may need a:

- **Certificate to work in a Prescribed Occupation - Crane or Hoist Operators Certificate** from [Workplace Health and Safety](#). This certificate is free and stays in effect indefinitely, though it cannot be transferred. You must be competent in operating the equipment covered in this certificate.
- **Commercial Operator's Licence** from the [Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry \(DAFF\)](#). Licence exams cost \$29.75 and licence fees vary. Licences stay in effect until 30 June each year and cannot be transferred. You need this licence to spray herbicides using:
 - engine-powered equipment onto another person's land.
 - hand-powered equipment in the following areas: Redcliffe and Caloundra cities, shires of Pine Rivers, Caboolture, Maroochy, Noosa, Cambooya, Clifton, Jondaryn, Millmerran, Pittsworth, Rosalie, Wambo, cities of Toowoomba and Warwick, and the town of Dalby.

Installing permanent watering systems for customers

To install a permanent watering system for customers, you may need an Installation of a Permanent Water System Approval from [your local council](#). Approval costs vary and it can take the council up to 4 weeks to process your application.

Conducting environmentally relevant activities (ERA)

To conduct environmentally relevant activities, you may need an Environmentally Relevant Activity Licence (a part of the development permit) from [your local council](#). Licence costs vary and it can take the council up to 4 weeks to process your application.

Collecting materials from crown land (including quarry material, natural grown timbers, plantation grown sawlogs and timbers)

To collect any materials from crown land, you may need a Sales Permit (Forest Products and Quarry Material) from DAFF. Permit costs vary depending on the materials you will collect,



and it can take up to 2 weeks to process your application. For more information, contact the [Business Support Unit](#).

Working in a fire ant restricted area

To work in a fire ant restricted area, you may need an [Approved Risk Management Plan](#). You need an approved plan to disturb or move high-risk items that may potentially spread fire ants. For more information contact [Biosecurity Queensland](#).

Legislation that may apply to your business

- *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966*
- *Forestry Act 1959*
- *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936*
- *Income Tax Regulations 1936*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991*
- *Queensland Building Services Authority Regulation 2003*
- *Subcontractors' Charges Act 1974*
- *Timber Utilisation and Marketing Act 1987*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

To access copies of legislation, visit www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

Useful industry contacts

Business Support Unit

For more information on licences, regulations, market research, business planning and other support services phone 13 25 23 or visit business.qld.gov.au

Landscape Queensland

Phone (07) 3286 1746

Visit www.landscapequeensland.com.au

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

Phone (02) 6248 9970

Visit www.aifa.org.au

