

THE MIDDLE EAST'S BEST HOME GUIDE

MAY-JUNE 2013 #5

# HOME OWNER

All for HOME, VILLA, OFFICES

You're  
Garden

You get what you pay for

Life on board  
Marine style  
in the interior

Symmetry  
& Asymmetry  
in Interior Design



**24 Hrs**  
VIDEO  
SURVEILLANCE

**KVADRAT  
SYSTEMS LLC** p51



**CLASSIC  
HOME DECOR** p24



**ProArt  
GALLERY DUBAI** p40



**LANDSCAPING** p46



# You're Garden

You get what you pay for

**I**n recent years local cities with their ambitious expansion plans have led to a thriving landscape sector. Due to the construction of many villas during this period their now exist many landscape companies who ply their trade on a daily basis throughout our communities. However one of the negative factors of this 'feast' is the emergence of less desirable elements within our industry which are not to the standard expected or required. Let me also add that some of these companies are not troubled by morals or ethics.



## Ask Questions

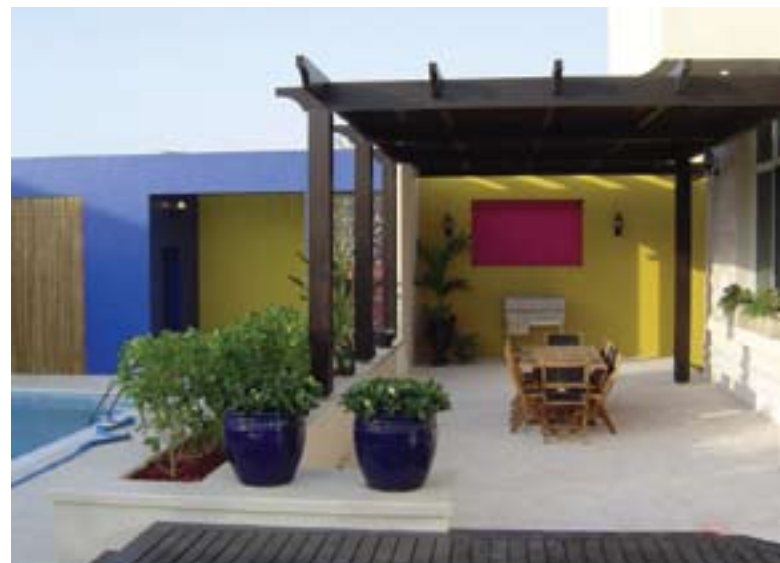
For these reasons home owners should be vigilant and alert to the dangers and risks involved when appointing a contractor to construct or remodel their garden and the 'warning' signs to look out for.

## Say what you want

Usually at the beginning of the process there is a meeting arranged between the client and the landscape company's representative. Some less desirable companies will at this point produce what we call in the trade a 'face man'. This is usually an individual who looks and sounds good but will have no direct input or involvement during the construction process whatsoever. Once the client signs on the dotted line they may never see him again unless he arrives to collect the various payments. For this reason it is vitally important for the client to insist (in no uncertain terms) that they wish to meet the person who they will be liaising with during construction. This meeting should take place 'before' any agreements are signed or any money changes hands. A reputable company will have no problem in fulfilling this request. This is your first line of defence where you can protect yourself from upset and financial loss later on.

## Scrutinize

When you meet the 'contact' person who will be ensuring you get the service you are paying for speak to him directly. Ask him questions about how he will carry out the work and listen to his responses. Assess his level of confidence when replying to you just like you would assess an individual in any walk of life. Do not allow the 'face man' to speak for him. The performance of the person you will be liaising with during this meeting will usually be a good indicator of the level of service you will receive during construction. If you are sufficiently impressed by the person in question then proceed with finalising but 'insist' that this person 'must' visit the site regularly and be fully involved in the construction along with being readily available to discuss any concerns you may have. If however you have a 'gut feeling' that something may be wrong don't hesitate in bringing the negotiations to an end regardless of any other factors.



# GARDEN & LANDSCAPE

## Monitor progress

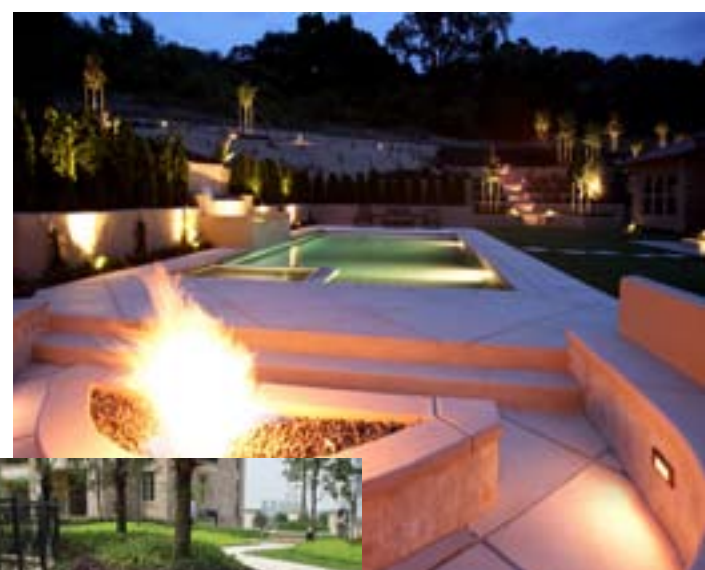
When you have past the previous stage and you have appointed a contractor your vigilance should not end there. Take an interest in the work as it is progressing. Reputable companies will have individuals that are as interested as you in seeing something beautiful take shape and will be further motivated by your interest (however don't get in the way of the work with your enthusiasm). There are many people within our industry who take 'real pride' in their work however this attitude is not universal.

## Softscape

There are various standards and requirements which 'must' be implemented during construction to ensure development and longevity of the landscape. These requirements include sufficient excavation of unsuitable soil in planted areas to allow the full development and growth potential for the individual species of plants. Some plants (trees) may require larger excavations to allow them to develop to their 'full size' which may seem a little excessive at the time of planting but remember 'more is good'. Don't be perturbed as it is you who will reap the benefits of this 'thoroughness' later on.

## Hardscape

The second element in your garden is the 'hardscape'. This can consist of bricks, paving slabs, (natural/fabricated), cobbles or decking. While the end product may look stunning it is also important that the bases (foundations) are sufficient to ensure durability and the beauty is long-lasting. When laying bases for pathways, patios or other structures it is important to excavate to sufficient depth and place and compact the correct material (roadbase) properly. This compaction should be achieved with the assistance of a mechanical compacting machine (whacker plate). If this essential work is not carried out ask 'why' and insist that it is done. In some instances it may be required to place concrete on top of roadbase for extra support in heavy trafficked areas or to prevent movement (settlement) under more delicate and rigid materials like porcelain or ceramic tiles. If 'proper' foundations are laid this will allow the various constructions to remain for many years but if they are not the hardscape could begin to disintegrate within a matter of months.





## Know what you're getting

The 'finishes' on any project are there for all to see and the quality will be clearly evident to all parties. Sub-standard contractors realise this so make efforts to ensure that the work on the surface is acceptable. However the same cannot be said for what they do below ground. It is for this reason the client (or an appointed person) should be familiar with the accepted standards and ensure they are followed without exception. Another element of the 'below ground' activities is irrigation. Again this should be monitored during implementation and the quality of materials should be assessed to ensure they are from a reputable manufacturer. There are many items on the market currently which are sub-standard, prone to flaws and have a limited lifespan. These poorly manufactured items should be avoided at all costs.

## Summary

To recap on this article what I am stating is the 'lowest price' may actually give you 'very bad' value for money and actually cost you much more in the long run. Safeguard yourself against these risks by appointing a reputable contractor who will deliver what they say. The contractor who may give the lowest quote may intend to cut every corner imaginable. When a project has been completed the standards of workmanship on the surface may look similar but with the effects of time, settlement and closer visual inspection the flaws will become apparent. At this stage it is 'too late' for caution. One final piece of advice, in my experience if a price sounds too good to be true.... 'it usually is'. ●●●

Daniel McNamara

