

Beware of rogue garden services

With plants starting to grow at this time of year, you may be targeted by rogue traders offering to do work in your garden. They may say they are working for the council or other authority and try to trick you into having unnecessary work done, for example by claiming you need to have trees cut down because they are an obstruction. Whatever work they do, they may overcharge for a poor-quality or incomplete job or take the money up front and vanish without doing any work.

Not all traders who cold call are rogue traders, but it's important to remember the golden rules:

- Never agree to work from someone you think might be a rogue trader.
- If you're not sure, don't open the door.
- If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- Use your door chain when opening the door to strangers.
- Properly check the identity of callers before opening the door.
- Keep doors and windows secure.

If you think a crime is being committed now or you are in danger, call the police on 999 immediately.

For non-emergencies, call the police on 101.

To report a problem with a trader and get advice, call Citizens Advice on 03454 040506.

If you want to have work done in your garden:

- Take time to get three quotes from reputable businesses you trust.
- Ask friends or family for recommendations.
- Use a scheme or association to find reliable businesses. For example:
 - Find local, trustworthy businesses through the Buy With Confidence scheme. All businesses in the scheme are vetted, approved and monitored by Trading Standards. Visit buywithconfidence.gov.uk or call 01392 383430.
 - Or use a member of an appropriate reputable trade association. Members must stick to their codes of practice. If a trader says they are a member of an association, check this is true.
- Decide who to use in your own time.
- Remember, if you agree to work in your home that will cost more than £42, you are legally entitled to a 14-day cooling-off period in which you can change your mind before the work starts. If you agree to the work starting within that time, you will be liable for any cost incurred by the business up until the point at which you cancel.

This article has been written by Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service
<https://www.devonsomersettradingstandards.gov.uk/>