

# How to Hire a Crop Consultant

Cooperative Extension Service  
College of Agriculture and  
Home Economics



## Guide A-607

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A producer's time is precious. Because producers may not have time to systematically monitor their plants week after week for potential pest or weed problems, one solution is to hire a crop consultant. There are certain pitfalls to watch for, but you can ask questions that will increase the chance that you'll be satisfied with who you hire. Before you begin to search for a consultant, ask yourself these questions:

### 1. *What exactly am I looking for?*

Do you want someone to visually scout once a week? Or do you want a person who also will make treatment recommendations and discuss various options? Also, do you want that person to carry out the treatment option you choose?

### 2. *How much am I willing to pay?*

Some of the factors to take into account include how often you want the person to scout, the extent of services needed, and the value of your crop.

For example, growers may pay as little as \$5 or \$6 per acre for a "basic" scouting service—compared to \$30 per acre in some locations for extensive consultation on high value crops. In addition, growers who have a lot of little fields are going to pay more than those with large fields.

### 3. *Is it important to me that the consultant be independent?*

Independent crop consultants are not affiliated with the sale of any product. But companies that sell chemicals also may provide scouting services. Are you concerned about potential conflict of interest?

### 4. *What is my management style?*

Look for a crop consultant you are comfortable with and who will fit in with your philosophy and personal management style.

## QUESTIONING THE CONSULTANT

If you are not familiar with the various crop consultants in your area, good sources of information are your local Extension agent and Extension specialists. Also, talk to other growers, your local farm coop, and/or local suppliers. Some additional questions to ask prospective consultants might include:

- How much practical, hands-on experience do you have?
- What is your educational background?
- Are you certified? According to NAICC, a Certified Professional Crop Consultant (CPCC) must have at least a bachelor's degree and four years' experience in the field, while a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) must have a high school diploma or its equivalent, plus two years' experience.
- How long have you been consulting in this area?
- What type of technology do you use?
- What methods (such as for sampling and data collection) do you use to make your decisions?
- What specific services will you provide, and at what cost?

Be sure to get this information in writing before you hire a consultant.

Call some of the consultants in your area and obtain "ballpark" figures on what consultants are charging. If a person offers scouting services, find out whether he or she will be doing the scouting personally, or a less experienced employee will be doing it.

**Table 1. A general classification of consultants.**

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<u>Class</u>	<u>Sub-class</u>
<b>Amateurs</b>	Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual</li><li>• Extension departments</li><li>• Student programs</li><li>• Research institutes (some)</li></ul> Executives between jobs Retirees
<b>Professionals</b>	Individual Independent companies Research institutes/associations Specialized service providers Trade associations/quasi-governmental agencies

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