

SHRUBS and GROUNDCOVERS



There are few topics in landscaping that generate more discussions than proper methods for shrub pruning. Practices that dictate shaving and shaping of shrubs do not benefit the health and longevity of the plant material. To maintain sustainability, a natural appearance of shrubs and other plant materials shall be the standard. The intention of most landscape designs is to achieve a more natural, less structured look which contributes to the longer term goal of achieving a landscape that can be managed and maintained by current practices. An example of design intent is evidenced by the use of a variety of blooming shrub types, and arranging them in masses on plans. A certain amount of attention is also given during design, to the combining of shrub types to complement each other's appearance. Attributes such as texture, color, time of bloom or conversely time of dormancy, and environmental conditions are considered during design to produce attractive composition in the landscape year round. While there are landscapes with formality as the intended appearance, it is less common. There are shrub species which conform to a sheared look better than others. Most of our desert landscape shrubs are selected by designers because of their beautiful natural shape. It is imperative that owners discuss style of a project's appearance with both the landscape architect and maintenance contractor. Sensible plant selection combined with knowledgeable maintenance crews can achieve the intended look for any landscape. Communication is the key.

WHEN PRUNING

DO:

- Remove dieback occurring from cold temperatures to rejuvenate spring growth at the correct time, i.e. - lantana, bougainvillea. Refer to Shrub Pruning Calendar on page 17.
- Remove growth that interferes with pedestrian movement.
- Prune shrubs and groundcovers only after flowering is completed.
- Discuss pruning style with owner.
- Be familiar with Renovation Method as described and illustrated on pages 19-20.
- Prune to increase quality or yield of flowers.
- Prune to thin branching structure but retain shape.
- Prune to direct and control growth of fast growing materials.
- Maintain plant health by removing dead, diseased, or injured wood.
- Prune to promote strong branching structure.
- Remove dried seed pods that haven't fallen to the ground on appropriate species.
- Use the Two-Step Naturalistic Approach-see Figure A.
- Use bypass hand-pruners, loppers, or hand saws properly sharpened to promote quick healing of pruning wounds.
- Allow shrubs and groundcovers to fill spaces and cover the ground, to maximize appearance of vegetation and blooms, so our urban environments are more attractive.

Refer to section on Renovation Style for Shrub Pruning and maintenance, page 19, for alternative recommendations which describe shrub pruning methods appropriate for large scale projects.

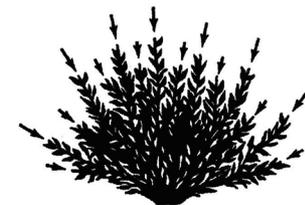
DO NOT:

- Shear shrubs with power tools or hedgers.
- Remove more than 1/5th (20%) of shrub foliage on a regular basis.
- Create formal or geometric shapes such as cubes or balls.
- Prune shrubs or groundcovers when they are blooming.
- Use dull blades that could tear or shred branches.

FIGURE A. TWO-STEP NATURALISTIC APPROACH



STEP 1-Use hand pruners to cut back branches and stems, creating a rough globe shape



STEP 2- Cut every other branch back to the first "V". Vary length of cuts randomly 6" – 9" long

APPROVED PRUNING TOOLS:

- Hand pruners such as bypass pruners, with 2 cutting edges to remove branches less than 1/2" diameter.
- Hand Saws - to remove branches over 1" diameter.
- Power equipment operated by trained personnel when appropriate for the situation.