

## **Prune Now, Pay Later . . . and Keep Paying!**

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**Q:** Our property would like to prune our shrubs and ground cover into formal shapes such as globes, squares or gumdrops. Does this create any problems?

**A:** Yes. Constant shearing is time-consuming and expensive. It leads to unnaturally shaped plants, inhibits the plant's food-making ability, reduces flowering, increases water demand, creates excess waste and shortens the life of the plant.

**Q:** When should our community prune its plants?

**A:** Common reasons for pruning include:

- Removal of dead, weakened or diseased branches.
- Removal of crowded or crossing limbs.
- Eliminate landscape hazards.
- Control or direct plant growth.

**Q:** When is the best time to prune plants in Arizona?

**A:** Properties can perform most types of routine maintenance, such as limb removal, any time of the year. Pruning frequency depends on the kind of plant material, seasonal conditions, flowering time, natural growth habit and landscape use. Prune deciduous tree during their dormant period, which usually is in the winter. Prune trees sparingly during the summer to avoid sunburn on trunks. Do not remove more than one-third of the plant's mass during one season.

**Q:** What type of pruning tools should I use?

**A:** A hand-pruning shear is the most common tools for limbs less than half and inch in diameter. Use a pruning lopper for limbs less than one inch but greater than half an inch. A hand-pruning saw is best for limbs measuring over one inch. Using appropriate, properly maintained tools improves the health and appearance of the plant. It also decreases the potential for injury and liability.

**Q:** What happens if a tree is improperly pruned?

**A:** Improper pruning can cause cracks along the trunk, heat injury to the trunk or branches, fungus and insect problems, and sprout formation. This can lead to a premature death. Additionally, it can create weak or unhealthy limbs, which are safety hazards.

**Q:** What is the correct procedure to prune an unwanted tree branch?

**A:** Remove the dead or undesirable branch at its attachment point to the trunk or another branch. Be sure to make your pruning cuts close to the branch bark ridge, which is the raised furrow of bark at the base of the branch. This will help reduce the risk of possible damage to the trunk tissue as well as eliminate any unsightly stubs.