



Sustainable Shrub Pruning, also known as Rejuvenation Pruning, is a widely-recognized industry standard practice for maintaining shrubs. This practice keeps shrubs at a reasonable size without the need for detrimental and harmful shearing. It also results in a fresher, more natural look.

Shear Pruning

Shear pruning is when plants are frequently cut back into unnatural plant shapes — cones, balls, flat tops, cylinders, etc. — throughout the growing season. Every few weeks, outer branches that grow outside the designated shape are cut off using a power trimmer. This practice is detrimental to the health of the plant. Because leaves are where plants store their energy, frequently shearing off leaves means the plant is routinely losing its energy reserves. This means the plant needs to use more resources and energy to regrow the lost foliage. This leads to more water use.

In addition, frequent shearing damages the plant in the long-term. Many sheared shrubs only have leaves on the very outside while the interior of the plant is bare. Over time, the frequent stress put on the plant through shearing weakens the plant and can eventually lead to death.

Sustainable Pruning

Conversely, Sustainable Shrub Pruning calls for trimming shrubs back to roughly half their size once or twice a year and then leaving the shrub to grow naturally in between prunings. Minor pruning is also done as necessary to any shrubs that encroach on streets, sidewalks or driveway areas or obstruct lines of sight at intersections, near road signs, or through windows.

This type of pruning is recommended by the Arizona Landscape Contractors' Association as well as the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association. In addition to being healthier for the plant, Sustainable Shrub Pruning can also boost curb appeal. It leads to more vibrant green foliage and allows residents to enjoy more seasonal blooms because plants are not being trimmed during their flowering season.



Seasonal Pruning stimulates natural growth and produces more blooms.



This healthy Sage reached its peak size at the end of the growing season.



During shrub renovation, plants are cut back to roughly 12"-18" above ground.





Prune following the season's growth. Normally these plants would be pruned to about half the size.

Plant Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bursage												
Creosote												
*Devil's River												
*Emubush												
Fairy duster varieties												
Globe mallow					after flowering							
Golden eye					after flowering							
Hop bush												
Jojoba												
*Myrtle												
*Ruellia varieties												
Sage varieties												
Salvia greggii												

Renovate following flowering and/or frost damage. Normally these plants would be pruned to about 4-6" from the ground.

Plant Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
*Acacia berlandieri												
*Blue bells												
Brittle bush												
Cape honeysuckle												
Chuparosa												
Cordia												
Dalea varieties												
Desert honeysuckle												
*Lantana varieties												
*Orange jubilee												
*Red bird of paradise												
*Yellow bells												
Yellow dot												
Paperflower												
Verbena												

Selectively prune as necessary to reduce size or remove flower stalks.

Plant Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Angelita daisy					Prune flower stalks at the base once blooms are spent							
Banana yucca					Remove dead stalks							
Deer grass					Remove stems at the base to keep in growth space as necessary							
Desert spoon					Remove dead fronds at base to keep fronds up from the ground							
Desert milkweed					Cut to ground if needed							
Fountain grass					Remove stems at the base to keep in growth space as necessary							
Ocotillo					Remove canes at the base as necessary							
Penstemon					Remove dead stalks							
Red/Yellow yucca					Remove stems at the base to keep in growth space as necessary. Prune flower stalks at base when blooms are spent							
Regal mist					Remove stems at the base to keep in growth space as necessary							
Soap tree yucca					Remove dead stalks							
Sugar sumac					Remove stems at the base to keep in growth space as necessary							
Turpentine Bush					Prune to the base to thin plant out (can renovate entire plant if necessary)							

