



**Landscape Maintenance
Considerations for Homeowner
Associations:
Save Money, Be Safe,
Look Good!**

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1. Consider landscape plants a long-term investment

- Trees and shrubs have monetary value
 - Species
 - Size
 - Age
 - Function
 - Condition
- Shade trees can lower cooling bills in summer.



Photo credit: Donna DiFrancesco, City of Mesa

Poor care practices lower plant value

- Destroy natural aesthetic
- Ruin property curb appeal
- Shorten plant life expectancy
- Raise replacement costs
- Creates hazards and damage potential



Photo credit: DLC Resources



2. Allow shrubs to maintain natural shape

- No shearing shrubs into unnatural shapes
- If needed, renovation pruning every 2-3 years



Photo credit: DLC Resources



Why is shearing discouraged?

- Keeps plants in stress
- Increases plant water requirements
- Decreases life span of plant
- Plants become twiggy and unsightly
- Creates unnecessary trips to the landfill, excess sound and air pollution

Shearing wastes time and money

- Time could be better spent:
 - Renovation pruning
 - Troubleshooting and maintaining irrigation systems
 - Scouting for pest problems



3. Prune only when necessary

Know when to prune
with the 4 D's:

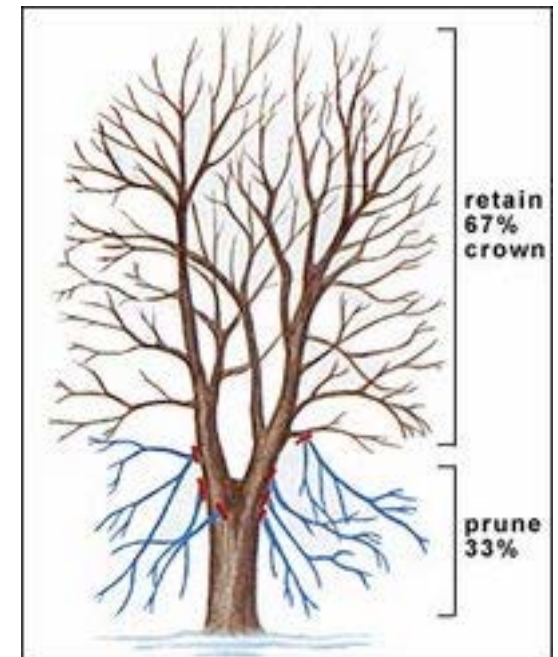
- 1. Dead**
- 2. Damaged**
- 3. Decayed**
- 4. Diseased**





Prune trees for safety and plant health

- Include tree care in the budget
- Palms should not be pruned above 9 and 3 o'clock
- Gradually raise crown
- No more than 1/3 removed annually
- **NEVER "TOP" TREES!**



REMEMBER:

A truck and trailer filled with plant trimmings does not mean an HOA is getting their money's worth from the landscape maintenance company.



Photo credit: Asset Landscaping

4. Allow some leaf litter to remain on soil

Leaf litter:

- Adds organic matter
- Releases plant nutrients
- Supports healthy soil microbes
- Helps remedy alkalinity

Blowers:

- Require fossil fuel
- Pollute the air with particulates
- Are noisy and cause sound pollution





5. Use plants adapted to the desert

- Poorly adapted plants:
 - require more water and other care.
 - often are more prone to pest attacks and nutrient deficiencies.
- Desert adapted plants:
 - are better able to survive the hot summers and cold winters.
 - do not require fertilizer or other soil modification.
 - often require less water than exotics.

Turf and trees don't mix well in the desert!

- Bermudagrass does not tolerate shade.
 - Even pruning won't correct this problem.
- Frequent, shallow sprinkler irrigation causes trees to grow quickly, but weakly.
- Lawnmowers and weed whackers can damage trees.



Photo credit: Asset Landscaping



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6. Install and maintain adequate irrigation for all plants

- **As plants grow, more water is required**
 - More drip emitters may be required each year
 - Adjust location of emitters to accommodate roots
- **Water deeply and infrequently**
 - Shallow watering:
 - Causes salt build up in soil
 - Water is wasted to evaporation
 - Makes plants less resilient to environmental change
- **Zone and irrigate plants based on their water requirements**
 - Trees, shrubs, cacti, annuals, turf should all be on separate irrigation stations or timers



Periodically troubleshoot irrigation systems



Photo credit: Donna DiFrancesco, City of Mesa

7. Hire a professional

The lowest bid is not always the best bargain!



- Smartscape Certified
- Arizona Certified Landscape Professional
- International Society for Arboriculture Certified Arborist



Save costs and improve property values

1. Consider landscape plants a long-term investment.
2. Allow shrubs to maintain their natural shape.
3. Do not prune trees unless necessary.
4. Allow leaf litter to remain on soil.
5. Use desert adapted plants.
6. Install and maintain adequate irrigation systems.
7. Hire a professional.

Other sources of information

- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
Master Gardener Hotline:
 - **602-827-8201**
 - Arid Gardener listserv:
 - <http://cals.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/html/general/question.htm>
- Arizona Municipal Water Users Association:
 - http://www.amwua.org/plant_information.html



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This information has been reviewed by University faculty.
cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1613b.pdf

Other titles from Arizona Cooperative Extension can be found at:
cals.arizona.edu/pubs