

Dear Property Management Company

My name is Cass Turnbull. I am a local author on the subject of pruning, and the founder and President of PlantAmnesty, a non-profit organization promoting better pruning. I am writing to suggest a grounds maintenance policy that will save you money by phasing out the practice of shearing shrubbery in favor of selective pruning.

Shearing is the common landscape maintenance practice of non-selective pruning that forms plants into shapes apart from their natural habit. It is best reserved for hedges. Shearing non-hedge plants is counter-productive, resulting in:

- Higher labor costs: shearing requires multiple visits per year (*see chart below*)
- Higher irrigation and materials costs: sheared plants require more water and nutrients
- Higher replacement costs: a sheared landscape plant must be replaced as often as every ten years
- More disease and insect problems: shearing stresses plants and reduces light and air, which can cause disease
- Less attractive landscapes: shearing often removes flower buds, and presents a starker landscape

Selective pruning, on the other hand, promotes the health and natural shape of a plant, saves money by reducing maintenance, and extends the life of the landscape. To implement selective pruning we recommend that you hire landscape maintenance companies that employ a certified horticulturist who knows the common and botanical names of the 200 most common landscape plants and how to selectively prune them. Maintenance contracts would specify that all non-hedge plants be selectively pruned. Plants too large for their locations should be transplanted or removed, and replaced with appropriate substitutes. Companies that provide selective pruning may charge more per man-hour; however their services will save money over time and result in healthy, attractive properties.

PlantAmnesty offers pruning classes, literature and DVDs on proper pruning, and training for grounds crews. I would be happy to provide more information and/or meet with you to explore how we could work together to create less costly, healthier, more colorful and welcoming landscapes for your properties. I would also appreciate the opportunity to submit an article on this topic to your association newsletter.

Thank you for your time. I wish you success in your business.

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