**Proper Pruning of Ornamental Shrubs in Your Florida Landscape**

Many Southwest Florida residents bring landscaping concepts from northern climates. While principles of balance, texture, and color are universal, plant selection and maintenance must be suited to the subtropical environment. Landscapes designed by professionals often aim for plants to grow naturally, but many homeowners request frequent mechanical shearing to maintain a manicured look. This practice, however, can negatively impact plant health.

**Why Shearing is Harmful**

* Reduces interior foliage. Shearing limits a plant’s ability to photosynthesize. Over time, plants like Buttonwood and Jasmine may have foliage only on the outer edges, with bare interior branches.
* Disrupts Flowering. Many shrubs, including Hibiscus and Ixora, bloom from apical tips. Shearing removes immature flower buds and disrupts natural growth cycles, reducing blooms.
* Encourages Weak Growth. Shearing promotes tender tip growth, which is vulnerable to frost, drought, and pest infestations. Stressed plants are more susceptible to disease and root dieback.

**Recommended Pruning Practices**

Horticultural professionals recommend deep, staggered cuts a few times per growing season rather than frequent shearing. In late spring, a reduction pruning of one-third of stem length encourages:

* Fuller Growth: Plants develop new branches and leaves, improving overall structure.
* Healthier Blooms: Removing insect-damaged foliage allows the plant to direct energy toward flowering.
* Stronger Roots: Maintaining a proper root-to-shoot ratio helps plants withstand environmental stress.

**Conclusion**

In Southwest Florida, proper pruning is crucial for maintaining the health and longevity of ornamental shrubs. Greenscapes is dedicated to educating clients on these best horticultural practices, creating beautiful landscapes while promoting environmental stewardship.