

Dear Monarch,

The landscapers were in our area, and they barely pruned anything! We have many shrubs, and I expect them to be neatly clipped on every rotation.

NATURAL PRUNING

Dear Concerned Resident,

A well-manicured landscape can look many ways, depending on what plants you have, where you live, and what season it is. In most cases, contemporary landscapes are planned so that they do not require constant shearing and hedging.

- We see a lot of over-pruning in most landscapes. This means that plants are not allowed to grow naturally, exhibit their natural forms, or recover before they are pruned again. Limiting their growth can compromise health and plants may struggle to cope with other environmental stressors. Plants may also become resistant to pruning and develop woody material inside, unable to fill in when they need to be reduced or shaped.
- What does less pruning mean? Less equipment! Gas-powered equipment typical to commercial landscaping produces air pollution and noise pollution. Even quieter electric equipment can be a nuisance. Hand pruning is not practical for large-scale pruning but can be utilized for less frequent, detailed trimming.
- Contemporary landscape design favors a natural, less structured look. Geometric shapes and other unnatural techniques often do not suit current plant palettes, such as native species. Letting these plants grow naturally improves their bloom cycle, general health, and aesthetics.
- What should be hedged? You may have plants like boxwood along sidewalks or other utility areas. It is horticulturally appropriate to allow these types of plants to put out new leaves and get a little “fluffy” before their next pruning.

MONARCH TIP

We love our California native plants. Most of these species prefer very light, infrequent pruning that may take place at different times of the year than traditional ornamentals. These should never be hedged or overly shaped.