

PRUNING VS. SHEARING: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

We're sure you've seen the carefully shaped shrubs lining the walkways of beautiful old buildings. While these shapes are impressive to see, how healthy are they for the plants? As it turns out, the process of "shearing" shrubs and bushes into unnatural shapes can be detrimental to the life of the plant.

Of course, there must be a healthy way to keep your shrubs and bushes aesthetically appealing. Today, we want to explain the differences between pruning and shearing, and help determine which method is right for your landscaping.



Shearing

Shearing shrubs involves dramatically altering the shape of the plant for aesthetic or privacy purposes. Shearing is usually a quick process of removing the exterior branches to create a streamlined, smooth shape, but improper shearing can be detrimental to the health of the plant.

Quick shearing can cause new growth only on the outside of the plant, not inside near the main stem. This results in a dead, twiggy, leafless interior and lower portion of the plant.

Shearing is a good option for huge barrier hedges that would otherwise require countless man hours to hand-prune, since long-handled or electric shears are generally the tool of choice for shearing. Otherwise, smaller shrubs benefit greatly from more delicate natural pruning as opposed to intense, sometimes haphazard shearing.



Pruning

Pruning shrubs creates a more natural form for the shrub, and is often more time and labor-intensive due to the slow, tedious removal of tiny branches and leaves. Pruning can be separated into two basic methods: **thinning** and **gradual rejuvenation**.

Thinning involves removing entire branches back to the trunk or ground level. This allows for sunlight, water, and essential nutrients to get inside to the lower parts of the shrub. By removing the oldest branches first, it allows room for brand-new side branches to grow.

Gradual rejuvenation involves annually removing the oldest, tallest, and least productive branches from ground level or just slightly above it. Remove one-third of the old, unproductive branches the first year, then half of the remaining branches the following year, and finally the remainder of the unproductive branches the third year. This is a great method to use for old, overgrown shrubs.



Choosing whether to prune or shear depends on the type, age, and size of the shrub, among other factors. If you're not sure what's best for your landscaping, trust the professionals at Hively to keep your shrubs looking great. Give us a call today at 717-292-5696; we look forward to hearing from you!