

WHY HARD PRUNE IN SPRING?

Many popular flowering landscape shrubs and small flowering trees are used for their outstanding blooms throughout our Southwest Florida landscape. Some of these that you will commonly find in our landscapes are Hibiscus, Jatropha, Bougainvillea, Plumbago, Thryallis and Ixora. These flowering shrubs are well suited for constantly warm and humid climates. Southwest Florida's subtropical climate sometimes has variations which affect these tropical and subtropical plants. Proper plant management is needed to maintain these flowering shrubs and extend their life span. Proper pruning is one of the most important cultural methods used to achieve this.

Fall and winter temperatures in the 30s and 40s cause leaf yellowing and leaf drop on Hibiscus, Jatropha and certain varieties of Ixora. This is almost an annual occurrence in this region. These plants will appear bare following the leaf drop. During this period the plants have slowed their growth down considerably. Growth does not begin to resume until the night temperature are consistently in the 60s and in this area, this begins in late spring.

In late spring, a reduction prune of stems of a third of their length is performed to encourage new fresh growth. Flowering shrubs will become much fuller with new leaves and branching, which was encouraged by this pruning. This pruning also removes stem, leaves and buds previously damaged by insect activity such as from Pink hibiscus Mealy bugs on Hibiscus and chili thrips damage on Plumbago. Flowering shrubs perform much better when hand pruned as opposed to trimmed with mechanical shears. Most flowering shrubs bloom from terminal buds. Less frequent, deeper pruning will allow for more flowering. Another benefit of the late spring pruning is that it helps equalize the root to shoot ratio of flowering shrubs. During frequent rainy season storms over the summer months, high winds often uproot some weaker rooted flowering shrubs and small trees such as Hibiscus, Bougainvillea and Jatropha that have not been properly pruned. A more compact Hibiscus, Bougainvillea, or Jatropha is much less likely to be uprooted.

In conclusion, flowering landscape shrubs and small flowering trees are a great addition to your Southwest Florida landscape. With proper pruning at the correct time of the year these plants can perform well and add the outstanding color impact they are known for. Greenscapes, with our professional management, strives to bring out the full potential of your landscape.

