

Caring for the Earth Means Caring for People

Landscaping can be easier...

Have you ever had the sneaking suspicion that there's got to be an easier (and less expensive!) way of caring for your yard? Or maybe you've given up and decided that all this maintenance is just the price of living in the desert? Permaculture, a system of working with nature instead of against nature, shows that land-scaping can be easier than we usually make it. Two of permaculture's guiding ethics



are: “Caring for the Earth” and “Caring for People”. It doesn’t have to be one or the other. We make our lives easier, more resilient and more abundant when we do both. A great place to put this in action for immediate results is by learning to prune desert plants properly.

All around town, plants are sheared into unnatural shapes: ding dongs, gumdrops and globes. Like sheep sheared of their wool, these shrubs look naked with little protection against our intense sun. So the plants do exactly as nature designed: they stop flower production and send out lots of new shoots to create shade for themselves. Then, the vicious cycle of pruning and excessive growth begins.

Next time your landscaper wants to shear your shrubs, consider allowing the plants to return to their natural shape instead. You’ll have a more resilient plant with lots of blooms for pollinators and shelter for birds (Caring for the Earth). And, you’ll make your landscaping easier, less expensive and more beautiful (Caring for People). After all, which of these Texas Rangers would you prefer?

To learn more about pruning desert shrubs, visit the UofA Cooperative Extension website at: extension.arizona.edu/pubs and do a search for publication az1499. Charlene Westgate is a permaculture landscape designer and owner of Westgate Garden Design.

Photos were taken in the same parking lot on the same day. Photo credits: Charlene Westgate

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