

What is Rejuvenation & Restoration Pruning and Why is it Important?

By Jeff Rons – Gainey Ranch Landscape Operations Manager

Rejuvenation pruning encourages new growth and ensures a fuller plant.

The fragrant, beautiful flowering Bougainvillea bush makes a statement in many Gainey Ranch landscapes. Vibrant green hedges are a defining feature, and decorative grasses provide a textured, natural feel to our properties. The growing never stops here, so routine landscape maintenance in Gainey Ranch often includes trimming plants to grow within their intended space, maintain their shape and general size and to recover from frost damage. The challenge you encounter when plants are consistently only lightly pruned or gently cut back throughout the year is that the only thing being removed is new growth. By trimming every few weeks, the plants leaves and flowers never reach their full potential. Instead, you get a “nice looking” flowering plant or a “just fine” shrub with a shortened lifespan. We have high standards for our Gainey Ranch landscapes and annual rejuvenation and restoration pruning is an important cultural practice and imperative for achieving lush, vibrant, vigorous & healthy growth and avoiding premature failure of the plant.

I know it seems counter-intuitive to prune back up to a foot of growth, even on occasion removing most of the foliage and I’m regularly accused of allowing my trim crews to “butcher or hack” shrubs and bushes at various stages of growth or strategic times of the year such as after frost or just before the low winter temperatures set in. We don’t “hack” anything that grows in the Ranch; even broken or fractured branches are strategically removed with the overall health of the plant in mind. Landscape professionals understand that the practice of rejuvenation and restoration pruning is much better for plant health and appearance than continuously trimming them back and causing woody growth and stress to the plant which ultimately attracts pests such as borers.

Why rejuvenation pruning is beneficial for select plants within Gainey Ranch

During a season of growth, plants tend to outgrow their assigned footprint in a landscape bed. Shrubs can encroach on walkways, hedges get too tall and leggy, and branches can block views and even become a safety hazard. Basically, plants outgrow their potential. Rather than looking beautiful and thriving, they take on a sparse bushy look. What rejuvenation pruning does that regular pruning does **NOT** is give the plant a completely fresh start. After rejuvenation pruning, foliage and flowers grow back in, and this healthy rejuvenation continues throughout the year. If we prune continuously, constantly taking the new inches of fresh growth off of the plant, you’ll never get to appreciate the plant’s true beauty. When homeowners see the results of a heavy rejuvenation pruning for the first time, they’re always surprised at how amazing the landscapes look—lush, green, blooming, full, yet appropriately sized for their space.

When We Perform Rejuvenation & Restoration Pruning (And When We Avoid It)

We perform rejuvenation pruning in fall once the excessive temperatures subside (September through early December). That way plants can go into their dormant season and can have the time to bounce back properly in the spring. They will rejuvenate quickly from the pruning and efficiently produce new growth. Several plants that benefit from this are: Desert Bird of Paradise, Lantana varieties and Baja Fairy Duster.

That said, not all plants benefit from rejuvenation pruning, so it’s important to know the growth habits and whether the plant will tolerate a hard cut-back. In some cases, such as this year with the frost damage to select plants in Gainey such as the Bougainvillea varieties, Natal Plum,

Orange & Yellow Bells, we will perform restorative pruning once the threat of frost is past. Many plant species in Gainey Ranch do not require rejuvenation or restoration pruning because they are self-cleaning plants, meaning dead material naturally sheds so the plant looks fresh without any pruning at all.

We understand that when these “cutbacks” happen, it may leave spots within your community looking a bit bare and possibly unappealing, but rest assured that it is only temporary and intended to assist with the preservation of some of your community’s largest assets.