



BUYING LOCAL

Whether you are redoing your landscaping or starting from scratch, selecting the perfect plant materials is important in creating a healthy, vibrant-looking yard.

Once you have picked which plants you want to purchase, your next decision is where to buy them. While cost is always a factor, the quality of the plants you are buying is essential. Doing your homework can help in determining how much to pay and what you are getting for the money.

A few options for buying plants include home garden centers, plant nurseries, or retail growers. While big box retail stores are an option in some cases, we have found that selecting plants from local nurseries is often more rewarding. Local nurseries have a better selection of plants that have proven to be successful in their region.

Under current watering restrictions, selecting native or drought-tolerant plant materials is common practice. The advantage of working with a local nursery is that the plants are either grown on site or purchased from local growers, which means that they are better-adapted to local climate and soil conditions.

Home garden centers buy in bulk from wholesale growers throughout the state and other parts of the country. These plants are grown in greenhouses under controlled environments, which reduces the ability of the plants to adapt to local conditions. It also increases the risk of introducing pests and diseases.

There are benefits to working with local nursery staff who are trained and knowledgeable of plants and plant care. They monitor plant health on a continuous basis and know the needs of the plants they sell.

Knowledge has value, and in this case, it may be well worth the difference, if any, in the cost of plants.



CONGRATULATIONS RICK THOMAS

One of the cornerstones of Environmental Concepts is Executive Vice President and Murrieta Branch Manager, Rick Thomas. Rick has been in the landscape maintenance and management industry since 1985, having worked on high-end property projects, condominiums developments, and large-scale, master planned communities.

Rick joined Environmental Concepts in the fall of 2000 and was fundamental in helping to build the company founded by owners Ron and Sherry Hill. Rick had met Ron Hill when they worked together for a Southern California based landscape maintenance and construction company.

Their work-styles and life-values meshed in such a way that they quickly became friends and Ron knew that Rick would be a tremendous asset to the company when he and Sherry decided to form Environmental Concepts.

Rick and Ron worked together on many large master planned communities, including several in the Inland Empire region. With their combined knowledge and experience, they have delivered, and continue to produce, finished projects that remain unsurpassed.

Rick and Ron's drive for quality, safety, and uncompromised service have consistently

been recognized by the community. They have been rewarded for their achievements at organization trade shows throughout the region.

Environmental Concepts was in the forefront of water conservation, far in advance of drought conditions being declared by the state and watering restric-

tions being mandated. Rick and his team were instrumental in working with communities to develop these ground-breaking projects.

Turf reduction and water conservation projects continue to be undertaken as project funding assistance has become available through several water agencies. Rick's knowledge and experience of California-friendly landscape materials and water-efficient irrigation has benefited many communities.

Rick is one of the principal facilitators for training account managers and crew members in the core values and principles of the company. While actively managing our Murrieta Branch, he oversees maintenance operations, safety training, quality control, and customer service.

Thank you for your 20 years of dedication to and hard work for Environmental Concepts and the communities that you serve.



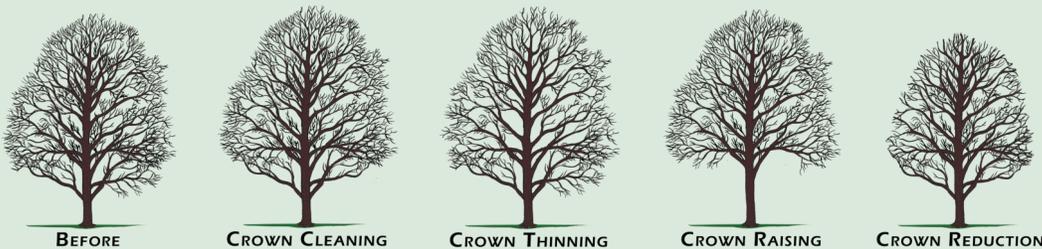
Proper Tree Pruning Practices

Trees contribute environmentally, aesthetically, and economically to the urban landscape, making long-term tree care vital in protecting this valuable asset. The degree of maintenance a tree requires is determined by its species, age, location, and past maintenance practices.

Proper pruning is an important element of tree maintenance and is essential in developing a tree's structural integrity and desirable shape. Pruning also helps to promote new growth and reduces potential risk from fallen branches. Improper pruning however, can cause permanent damage to a tree and even shorten its life.

Identifying the species of the tree to be pruned as well as researching its needs are highly recommended before proceeding. In addition to understanding the tree's pruning needs there are a few things to consider before commencing.

Pruning causes stress, so "prune with a purpose" and do not remove any live branches without a reason. Also, when deciding how much to prune, the general rule is "as little as possible," and no more than 25% of the crown (leaf canopy) during a single growing season.



Specific types of pruning may be needed to keep a tree in a healthy, attractive, and safe condition. The following is a list of common tree pruning techniques:

Crown Cleaning (light pruning) is the removal of small overhanging, damaged, or dead branches that can easily be reached from the ground. It may be performed almost any time of the year, but avoid hot summer temperatures. Basic skills and experience are needed to make the proper cuts and to avoid causing harm or damage to the tree.

Crown Thinning is the removal of selective branches and limbs to improve the structure and shape of the tree. Crown thinning increases air flow and light penetration. It also reduces the weight on limbs and minimizes the "sail" effect caused by the wind. However, removing large-diameter branches or limbs can result in substantial canopy loss and create a wound that may cause significant damage to the tree.

Crown Raising (canopy lifting) is the removal of a tree's lower branches for visual purposes or because they obstruct or interfere with proper clearance for pedestrian or vehicular movement. Crown raising is best performed when a tree is young or medium-aged to prevent the branches from maturing to a large diameter. Care is needed to avoid removing large limbs that can leave sizable wounds and potentially lead to trunk defects and decay.

Crown Reduction is the diminution of a tree's height and spread by selectively pruning limbs back to the next secondary branch. Unlike topping, crown reduction is a proper maintenance technique that helps to maintain the structural integrity and form of the tree. Tree topping however, is an unacceptable prun-

ing method that indiscriminately removes branches from the crown of the tree.

Anything beyond light pruning or working above the ground using power equipment should be performed by a qualified tree professional, under direction of a certified arborist. The arborist can determine the type of pruning needed to improve the tree's health, appearance, and safety. Using a qualified tree professional also reduces the potential for damage to the tree and helps to ensure its health and future.

How Weather Impacts Landscape Maintenance

Coping with adverse weather is the nature of the landscaping industry. Conditions that directly affect maintenance performance are extreme temperatures (heat and cold), measurable precipitation, and wind.

Any of the above can make performing maintenance tasks challenging. Determining weather conditions in advance however, and applying precautionary measures can help to reduce risk, injury, and maintenance schedule changes.

Although Southern California weather is generally considered mild, we regularly experience high-heat in the summer, below-freezing morning temperatures in the fall and winter, Santa Ana winds, and rain-days.

Working under these conditions is common practice and because many maintenance tasks need to be completed, work continues at a safe and cautious pace as required by state and federal labor laws.

High heat conditions have the most specific requirements, since it is not possible to dress for the heat as it is for the cold. Precautionary measures are applied when temperatures reach into the 90's and above.

Accumulation of water caused by excessive rain can impact turf mowing operations. Large equipment cannot be used in these situations without risking damaging the turf-grass and/or equipment.

High winds, especially during a Santa Ana event, can also have an impact on maintenance tasks such as the raking, sweeping, or blowing of leaves and grass clippings.

Our personnel are trained to monitor temperatures and site conditions and to practice safety program procedures should any of the above-described conditions occur.

