



Fall pruning of grasses and roses

Here at the nursery, for most of us, the harbinger of autumn is the arrival of mums and bulbs. For me, fall doesn't really start until I get the questions about cutting down grasses and pruning roses. I tend to get these question a lot and they are usually prefaced with "I know you told me last year, but..."



Let's do grasses first! Grasses will add some awesome winter interest. There is nothing better than watching (through the window!) a birdy swaying around on a grass while the snow piles up. Leaving the foliage upright also helps to shed moisture from around the crown. If the crown gets too wet it can rot. I have also

seen crowns split apart from water freezing in the center. It is very important to cut the grasses back early in the spring. You want to make sure to get them cut to the ground before new foliage starts to sprout. Otherwise you will end up with all those 2" sticks hanging out at the base of the grass or you will have shredded leaves from cutting off new growth.

Shrub roses like Knock Outs and Drifts should be pruned in the spring. You will want to prune them when you see some buds swelling. Prune off any dead within the plant and prune off any tips that have died back and then prune them into shape. Don't cheat and try to do it all at once as you will end up with stubs by the time you get everything looking good! If you have hybrid roses (Teas, Grandifloras – those fancy ones) they should be pruned in the fall. I usually prune mine down to about 8-10", and make sure you do not cut below the graft. After they are pruned I cover mine with a layer of straw or leaves – if you choose leaves it is very important to get them off the crown and graft early, early spring or else they can cause the crown and grafts to rot.

PS. It is now official – I have had several calls and questions about pruning these plants!

Happy Fall k



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