

FALL PRUNING

I guess I have to give in and decide that fall has come upon us in a rush and start preparing for fall clean-up and winterizing. I am still hopeful for a spell of beautiful sunny weather in the next couple of weeks.

Before you get too busy pruning and cutting back your plants, remember the ones that shouldn't be pruned in the fall. Two that come to mind foremost are lilacs and forsythia. They have both formed their bud-set for next year and by pruning them in the fall, you will prune off the flowers for next spring. These two should be pruned within three weeks of final bloom in spring.

Your hydrangeas should be pruned only to remove the dead flower heads. In the spring you can prune them hard for shape and they will bloom on new wood.

Your roses should only be lightly pruned so you have plenty of winter protection. If we have a hard winter and some of the branches freeze, it's good to have lots of branch left so you can prune it off in spring and there is plenty of room for new growth. In spring you know the branches that are dead as they will be black. Just prune to the end of the black and new growth will start there.

It's a good time to prune your cedar hedges. It's cool and the need for watering has diminished greatly. Pruning now is not so stressful on the cedars. Remember to pick up some deer netting (a nice light material almost unnoticeable) to wrap your cedars so the deer don't eat them this winter. I always throw a bag of blood meal around my hedge for extra deer deterrent. Plant Skyd is also a wonderful product for keeping the deer out and only needs to be applied every two or three months.

All spirea, ninebark, potentilla and weigelia need a good pruning to take off the old seed heads and give the bush fresh shape. If you leave this to spring, it's sometimes hard to get them pruned because the new growth comes at the end of the branches first.

Lots of perennials are losing their luster now but I like to leave all the foliage on the plant so in spring you can usually just clean up all the dried leaves and branches and the plant can start fresh. This protects the roots for winter as well.

It's also time to start thinking about bulbs. You can see where there are bare spots and it's a great time to plant for early spring blooms. There are so many kinds and colours, it's fun to make a great spring display.

It's a great time to plant trees and shrubs with the cool temperatures. As you look around your yard, see if you are missing some great fall colour. It's a great time to shop as you can see the colour in the plants now.

Have a great week and make the most the time we have still to plant and prune and enjoy the beauty in our gardens.

~ Debbie Morris – Blue Mountain Nursery, Armstrong BC